UNFADED GLORY

THE 8th PUNJAB REGIMENT 1798-1956

Rifat Nadeem Ahmad
Rafiuddin Ahmed

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To all who served with the Regiment

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Preface

This book is last in the series of three volumes planned by the late Major General Rafiuddin Ahmed to narrate History of the Baloch[1] Regiment. The first two volumes had covered the old 10th Baluch and Bahawalpur Regiments until their amalgamation with 8th Punjab Regiment in 1956. The 8th Punjab was a proud regiment, older than the Baluchis, and required a separate volume to do justice to its military exploits. This volume describes the history of 8th Punjab Regiment from its inception in 1798 as Madras Native Infantry to its final merger with the Baluch Regiment in 1956. Unfortunately, early regimental records have not survived, and that period of the regimental history had to be pieced together from official records of campaigns and operations. As a result, the accounts are sketchy at places and lack the personal touch so essential for a regimental history.

The British dominion in India began with their victory at Plassey in 1757. Over the next decades, they developed a remarkable military system, which enabled them to conquer and then hold on to the sub-continent for almost two hundred years. But the Indian Army's role did not remain restricted to India; it also became the enforcer of British imperial interests on a global scale. During the two World Wars, the Indian Army saw extensive service in almost all the major British military operations. Trained to maintain British rule, it had rapidly adapted itself to the modern warfare of twentieth century, and at the end of the Second World War, it was the largest all-volunteer army the world had ever seen.

8th Punjab Regiment had its antecedents in the Old Coast Army[2] of Madras Presidency. Its battalions were raised more than two hundred years ago during the upheaval of Mysore and Mahratta Wars, when the British were rapidly expanding their Indian forces. Over the next hundred years, as the British consolidated their hold over India, these battalions served in

different parts of the sub-continent. But it was service in Burma at the end of the 19th century, which gave them a shared identity and led to their coming together as 8th Punjab Regiment in 1922.

Evolution of the Regiment from Madras Native Infantry to Burma Battalions to Punjabi Regiments, and finally to Baloch Regiment is a saga of valour, sacrifice and martial prowess. The history of the Regiment spans more than 150 years, during which its battalions fought in the Mahratta Wars, the Burma Wars, the Afghan Wars, and finally the two World Wars, besides numerous smaller campaigns and operations. From the beaches of Gallipoli to the trenches of France; and from the stifling heat of the Mesopotamian desert and the Burmese jungle to the icy peaks of Italy, the Regiment proved its mettle repeatedly. In the process, it earned countless honours and awards including three Victoria Crosses, and an enviable reputation as one of the most distinguished amongst the fabled regiments of the British Indian Army.

This is the story of the soldiers who made up the Regiment; simple men who served with loyalty and dedication, and yet, fearsome warriors, who fought for the love of their profession; and for honour—theirs and that of their beloved *Paltan*.[3] It is also the story of the officers who led these men and inspired such fierce loyalty among them. British officers had an almost paternalistic relationship with their Indian troops; based upon mutual trust, respect and devotion. It was this fortuitous combination, which produced the unique institution of the British Indian Army, and helped the British to carve out and then hold on to one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen. Much as we detest our colonial past, we cannot help but admire the professionalism and dedication of the men who created this army, and the military legacy that they bequeathed us.

The old units of 8th Punjab Regiment now form the senior-most battalions of Baloch and Sind Regiments of Pakistan Army.

Since independence, these units have answered the call of duty in defence of the Motherland on numerous occasions. The battles that they have won, and the sacrifices that they have rendered, are a testament not only to their courage and professionalism but also to the enduring legacy of the men who came before them. The name of 8th Punjab is fading from memory, but the glorious legacy of this proud regiment lives on.

Rifat Nadeem Ahmad
Siksa, Baltistan
March 2006

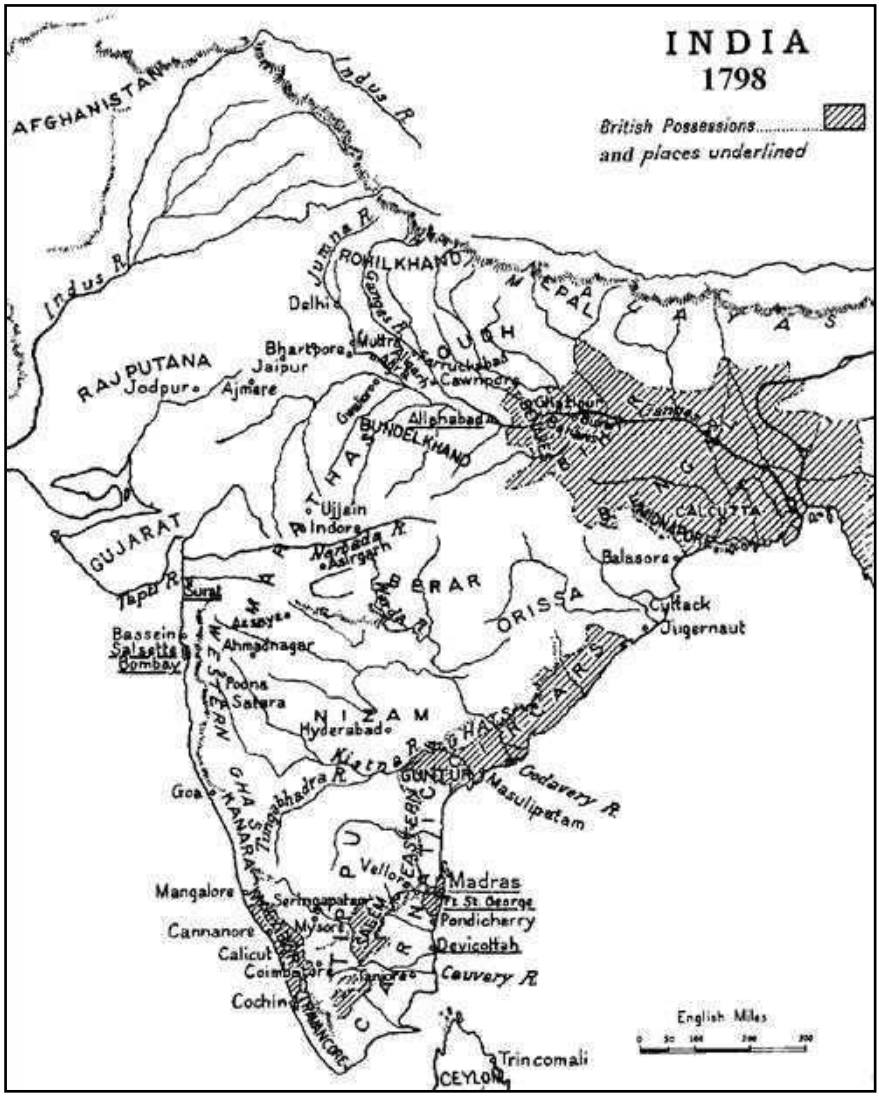
1
The Madras Infantry

The 18th century was a momentous period in the history of India. It saw the dramatic collapse of Mughal power and the equally dramatic rise of the British. As the Mughal Empire crumbled, India rapidly disintegrated into numerous warring states and princedoms. These states fielded large armies but their effectiveness was dubious at best. While there had been a virtual revolution in military technology and tactics in the West, in the East they had remained unchanged for centuries: "Warfare in India was still a sport; in Europe it had become a science".[1] A fact that soon became apparent, when small well-disciplined European forces routed large Indian armies with embarrassing ease.

Several European countries had been maintaining trading enclaves in the coastal regions of India since the early 17th century. For more than a hundred years, they were content at being traders and businessmen. However, India's descent into chaos not only threatened their commercial interests, but it also offered them vast military and political opportunities. The French were the first to sense this and were soon dabbling in local politics. At the same time, they also tried to undermine their European competitors. In 1746, they attacked and captured the British trading post of Madras. South India now became another flashpoint of Anglo-French rivalry, as the two Imperial powers intrigued and fought against each other in shifting alliances with local Indian rulers. In the end, the British proved wilier, and the French lost in India. British political ascendancy, however, was not so much intentional, as it was dictated by necessity—at least initially. However, the necessity to protect their commercial interests from French competition and local anarchy soon gave way to opportunism, and then naked aggression.

The commercial enclaves of British East India Company were divided into the 'Presidencies' of Bombay, Madras and Bengal. Initially, these enclaves were guarded by small garrisons of European troops with a few local auxiliaries. Each presidency was to later acquire its own army consisting of a British contingent augmented by a large force of Indian troops. But it was the French, who first employed local troops on a regular basis. They had enlisted Indian soldiers as early as 1674, and in 1693, deployed several hundred sepoys against an invading Dutch force in defence of Pondicherry. By 1739, the French had trained and drilled a force of 5000 Muslim sepoys,[2] and the force that captured Madras in 1746 had both European and Indian troops.[3] The British emulated the French and raised local levies commanded by their own chiefs. At first, these levies consisted mostly of poorly trained and ill-disciplined troops armed with whatever weapons they could lay their hands on.[4] But the British soon realized the advantages of training and arming them on modern European military lines, and within a few years, had trained and deployed a large army of sepoys that would serve them well in the coming years.

Major Stringer Lawrence, who is credited with being the Father of the British Indian Army, was appointed commander of the Company's forces in Madras in 1746. He raised a small force consisting of a European regiment[5] and several companies of sepoys with regular establishment and pay. Each company consisted of a subedar, four jemadars, eight havildars, eight naiks, two carriers of the colours, two drummers, one trumpeter, one conicopoly (*munshi*) and 84 privates[6] (sepoys). The sepoys were also issued European uniforms to "give them a more martial appearance".[7] Over the next several years, Lawrence laid down the framework on which the Indian Army was built; both in terms of training as well as administration. He was the driving force behind the code of rules defining terms of service, and the rights and obligations of sepoys concerning everything from training,



1. India at the end of 18th Century.

discipline and promotion to pay, disability allowance and pension—concepts quite alien to India.

Hostilities between the French and the British resumed in 1751, as they took opposing sides in the struggle for control of the Carnatic. The sepoys first distinguished themselves during the

defence of Arcot by Robert Clive in 1752, where for fifty days, he successfully defended a mile of walls with 120 British soldiers and 200 sepoys, against a besieging force of more than 3000 French and their local allies. A few days later, at the head of a force of 1800 sepoys, he routed a larger French force at Kaveripak—after having marched 66 miles in 36 hours.[8] A senior British officer was much impressed by the performance of the sepoys and wrote to Clive: "Your Nellore sepoys are glorious fellows and their Subedar as good a man as ever breathed. He is my sole dependence".[9] In 1756, this same Subedar Yusuf Khan in command of the Company's sepoys repulsed an incursion by Sultan Hyder Ali of Mysore in Madura. He was later to run afoul of the British, who had him hanged in 1763.

In 1758, Madras was again threatened by the French, who captured Fort St. David and besieged the town itself. The British responded by raising regular companies of sepoys, who acquitted themselves well in the war against the French. A series of engagements culminated in the decisive battle of Wandiwash in 1760, which ended French political ambitions in India. The British had now emerged as a major military and political power in India. For the British, the remarkable outcome of this struggle had been the revelation of the fighting capabilities of Indian soldiers. The sepoys were not only amenable to modern training and discipline but had proven their ability to fight alongside, and against, European troops. The British now had a vast manpower resource at hand, which could be exploited to further their political aims in India. The following years saw a rapid expansion of their native forces in India.

In 1759, Madras followed the example of Bengal Army, where Clive had organized and deployed sepoys into regular battalions modelled on the European pattern. Five battalions of Madras Infantry were formed consisting of about a thousand men divided into ten companies. Each battalion had a complement of

two British officers, a Native or 'Black' Commandant and three British sergeant-majors, while each company was authorized one subedar, two jemadars and six havildars.[10] By 1765, the number of these battalions had risen to ten, and in 1767, to sixteen. In 1766, major organizational changes were implemented in the Madras Army, which placed each battalion under the command of a British captain. Initially, these battalions were designated as Carnatic or Circar battalions depending on their place of origin; but by 1784, all were designated as battalions of Madras Native Infantry.[11] In 1785, the post of Native Commandant was abolished. As a consequence, the status and responsibilities of Indian officers were considerably diminished. In the same year, due to a shortage of qualified surgeons in the Army, a native 'doctor' was attached with each infantry battalion. His pay amounted to around thirty-one rupees per month and was derived mostly from regimental stoppages. These doctors were forerunners of the Regimental Medical Officers.[12]

A British manuscript of the time describes the training regulations for a Company of Native Infantry according to the new Establishment: On the parade ground, "the Officers were drawn up in line, 3 paces in front of the Company, the European Subedar opposite to the 3rd file on the right, and the Subaltern opposite to the 3rd file on the left, and the Jemedar in the centre. The European Serjeant takes his station 3 paces in the rear and opposite to the centre of the Company and the Havildars form and drop in a line with the Serjeant. The alacrity of the Corps depends upon the interior arrangements established for the Companies or Troops composing it. If these are neglected the duties of the Camp and Garrison will be performed in a slovenly manner". Military music played an important part in training and drill of the troops: "Precision can only be acquired by the determinate notes of Music and it is only by such assistance that men can soon perform the same step with uniformity". The instructions for forming the

Square in the face of the enemy were precisely laid down: "If a Battn (battalion) is attacked by a large Body of Horse on a plain, it is to form the Square or Oblong, half and face outwards. Should the Horse appear within the distance of 300 Yds the Bttn with a well directed fire of Grape or Case shot will in all probability keep them at bay; if however from superior numbers and the intoxication of Bang (*bhang* or opium) they should approach within the distance of 100 yds, the front rank will make ready. If the Cavalry should still persist in advancing to the distance of 60 yds, the front rank will present and the rear rank make ready ... It is of the first importance that men should preserve their fire on this occasion. If the Cavalry should however persist in advancing to the distance of 50 yds the front rank will fire ..." On further advance of the enemy cavalry, the Square was to remain "steady and fully determined to defend themselves like Gallant soldiers to the last extremity".[13]

With the French largely marginalized, four major centres of power were left in South and Central India. The Mahrattas controlled a wide swathe of territory in the central part of India, while in Deccan was the dominion of the Nizam, and south of it the Sultanate of Mysore. The British had vast holdings in Bengal and on both sides of the Indian Peninsula centred at Bombay and Madras. Each eyed the other with suspicion and plotted and manoeuvred to gain the upper hand. In the end, it was the British who would emerge as victors. But first they had to contend with Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan—the Tigers of Mysore. The valiant sultans represented the last real hope of India against foreign domination. During the next three decades, the British remained engaged in a desperate struggle with the Sultans of Mysore. However, by a combination of skilful diplomacy, superior military skills, and treachery, the British were finally able to defeat Tipu Sultan. Throughout this struggle, the Madras Army was at the forefront of military operations.

The First Mysore War began in 1767, when the British in alliance with the Nizam of Deccan and Mahrattas attacked Mysore. Colonel Joseph Smith marched into Deccan with a force of 5000 sepoys of Madras Infantry, a European battalion and small detachments of cavalry and artillery. However, Hyder Ali turned the tables on him by buying off the Mahrattas, who went home, and persuading the Nizam to switch sides. It was the British who now found themselves on the receiving end of an invasion. Colonel Smith withdrew into the Carnatic but was pursued by Hyder Ali. In two actions at Chengamah and Tiruvannamalai, the well-trained and disciplined Madras Infantry routed the much superior forces of Mysore and Hyderabad. Colonel Smith was full of praise for the courage and steadfastness of his sepoys under such adverse circumstances: "I never saw men behave with more resolution and intrepidity than those I have had the honour to command".[14] The British now went on the offensive but in 1769, Hyder Ali in a bold stroke, suddenly appeared at the gates of Madras with a cavalry force of 6000, forcing the British to sue for peace.

The engagements of Chengamah and Tiruvannamalai were watershed events in the history of sepoy units in India. Here, for the first time, they fought major battles against vastly superior forces and remained steadfast in the face of overwhelming odds. They proved not only their courage and physical toughness, but also their ability to execute complex manoeuvres under fire. These battles are also an early illustration of the leadership of British officers like Colonel Joseph Smith, who, like Robert Clive at Arcot, had shown the potential of Indian troops when led by competent leaders.

During the next three decades, the Madras Army remained engaged in military operations against Mysore, the French and the Mahrattas. But Mysore continued to pose the biggest threat to the British in the south. In 1780, during the Second Mysore War, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan annihilated Colonel William Baillie's

force of almost 4000 troops at Polilur. Soon, Hyder Ali had overrun the whole of the Carnatic. Two years later, Tipu surrounded and forced the surrender of Colonel John Braithwaite's force at Annagudi in Tanjore. However, Hyder Ali's death in 1782, was a serious setback to the cause of resistance to the British. Tipu, although a brave and resolute man, could not match his father's skills as a general and statesman. The British were soon able to make up the reverses they had suffered at the hands of Hyder Ali.

By the end of the Third Mysore War in 1792, Tipu had suffered heavy losses, lost half his kingdom and had to surrender two of his sons to the British as hostages. In 1798, the British decided to permanently remove the threat posed by him. A large army made up of troops from the Madras and Bombay Armies laid siege to Tipu's capital at Seringapatam in 1799. After a gallant defence, Tipu Sultan fell defending his capital, defiant to the last. His death marked the end of the last credible challenge to British expansion in India. The wars in South India had demonstrated the superiority of British arms over that of the Indian, and of well-organized and disciplined infantry over massed cavalry. They also served as a vast laboratory for the British to try and test their military tactics for war in India.

The Mysore Wars had necessitated expansion of the Madras Army, which by the turn of the century had expanded into forty infantry battalions and eight cavalry regiments.[15] In 1796, the infantry battalions were grouped into regiments of two battalions each, while the Army itself was divided into six brigades. The reorganization of 1796 increased the role of British officers in the command structure of the regiments. Regiments were now commanded by colonels, and each battalion had a complement of one lieutenant colonel, one major, eleven lieutenants and five ensigns.[16] The system was not very popular due to undue interference of the Colonel of the Regiment in battalion affairs and in 1824, single-battalion regiments were restored.[17]

Regimental Colours were introduced in the Indian Army after the formation of regular battalions in 1759. By 1801, their design was standardized in conformation with the Colours of the British Army. Each battalion had two Colours: King's Colours consisting of the Union Flag of Great Britain and Ireland; and Regimental Colours with Battle Honours inscribed on them.[18] The Colours served an important role not only as rallying points during battles, but also as a source of identity and pride for the sepoys. With time, they acquired an almost mystical significance. The sepoys took their oath on the Colours and treated them with a respect bordering on religious veneration.

In 1800, the pay of a sepoy was two Star Pagodas[19] per month. *Batta*[20] was fixed at one fanam per day or in lieu, when grain was in short supply in the market, one *seer* of rice per day.[21] Subedars received twelve Star Pagodas, increasing to fifteen after six years in the rank and twenty after ten years. Disability pension was sanctioned for all Indian ranks; the rate being full pay of rank at the time of casualty.[22] The troops procured and paid for their food from their own pockets. However, in special circumstances, when either there was a shortage of food stuff or high inflation, the Army stepped in to provide free half-rations.[23] These arrangements were revolutionary for a country where the troops often went without pay for months, the wounded and the dead were left on the battlefield, and concepts of pension and disability allowance did not exist. The East India Company also took special care to keep its soldiers well-armed. Weapons were procured from England and 100 percent reserves were kept in store. To ensure quality of the weapons and their proper maintenance, a Military Store Department was set up in 1802, with its own warehouse and inspectors.[24]

The Mahratta Wars led to further expansion of Madras Army so that by 1826, it had 52 infantry battalions, eight cavalry regiments and the Corps of Artillery and Pioneers, besides three

European infantry battalions. This was the heyday of the Old Coast Army. After the fall of Mysore and defeat of the Mahrattas, British focus shifted towards north and west, as they consolidated their conquests and moved towards the Afghan frontier. The lion's share of fighting the Sikhs, the Baloch Chieftains of Sindh and the Afghans went to the more favoured Bengal Army, while the Madras Army found itself without an enemy to fight against. Except for the campaigns in Burma, the Madras Army was reduced to garrison duties. Even during the Great Rebellion of 1857, when the Madras Army remained loyal to the British, its units did not play a major role in suppressing the revolt. Between 1862 and 1864, twelve Madras battalions were disbanded.

Lack of action made service with Madras units less glamorous for the more ambitious and adventurous British officers, who preferred service in the more active units of Bengal and Bombay Presidencies. All this brought about inevitable deterioration in both morale and performance of the units. It also encouraged British prejudice towards the shorter and darker South Indians, who appeared 'non-martial' compared to the taller soldiers from the north. As theories of 'Martial Races' gained wider currency, the fate of Madras Infantry was sealed. Eight more battalions were struck off in 1882, while seven were reconstituted with northerners as Burma Battalions between 1890 and 1893. In 1895, armies of the three presidencies were merged, and under Lord Kitchener's reforms of 1903, all infantry regiments were renumbered and renamed, with all reference to the old presidency units being omitted. Several regiments of Madras Infantry were converted into Punjabi regiments, while a few more were disbanded. By the outbreak of the First World War, remnants of the Madras Infantry had been reduced to three pioneer battalions and eight Carnatic battalions. These too vanished soon after, so that by 1939, all that remained of the Old Coast Army was the Corps of Sappers and Miners.

Recruitment for the British was never a problem. The profession of arms was highly esteemed in India and service with the British was much sought after due to the vastly better service conditions. Initially, the British employed local sub-contractors or *jemadars* for recruitment. Later on, the regiments relied upon their own men to recruit from amongst their kinsmen, making the regiments close-knit family affairs.[25] The sepoys were recruited locally and Muslims made up one-third to half of the total strength. A Government document from 1770 states that sepoy battalions then consisted of Muslims, Tamils and Telugus, while Colonel James Welsh in 1830, described the Madras Army as principally composed of Muslims, Telugus, Tamils and Pariahs.[26] The report of a commission on organization of the Indian Army in 1859, gave the breakdown of Madras Infantry as Muslims (15000), Telingas (Telugus) (15000), Tamils (4000), Brahmins and Rajputs (2000) and Other Castes (2000).[27] Major General James Michael in 1888 stated that, "The composition of the infantry is almost identical throughout all the regiments … there are 270 to 300 Mussulmans, and 300 to 350 Telingas (Hindoos) in each corps".[28]

Unlike the Bengal Army, caste was not an issue in the Madras Army and men from different religions and races seem to have meshed quite well. There were no disciplinary problems of the kind that plagued the caste-conscious Bengal Army. In 1798, Major General George Harris described the Madras sepoy as "much inferior to the northern recruits in caste, size and appearance" but nevertheless, "hardy and thrifty, being less subject to local attachments and little encumbered with religious habits or prejudices".[29] British obsession with physique and appearance was apparent even at this early stage: they wanted soldiers who appeared impressive on the parade ground. The South Indian's short stature and dark complexion would be his undoing; despite having performed so well during the most crucial period of British conquest of India.

British officers of the Indian Army were probably the most vital component of the East India Company's military enterprise. No doubt it was their professionalism, energy, initiative, courage and devotion to their men that allowed these officers to command and lead the sepoy regiments to such spectacular feats of arms, while their versatility and strong sense of duty allowed them to manage civil affairs with equal aplomb. However, the beginning of British Officer Corps in India was quite inauspicious. In the early days of the East India Company, no respectable gentleman cared to join the Company's armies, and its officers were derived mostly from lower social classes. Things improved when at the end of the War of Austrian Succession, many surplus officers from the British Army were transferred to the Company's forces. In 1796, they were granted temporary local commissions in the name of the Crown by Commander-in-Chief, India.

As the Company's armies expanded, it opened its own military academy at Addiscombe, England in 1810. The status of Company's officers however, remained below those of the regular British Army.[30] It is a credit to these intrepid men that despite poor pay and low status in a highly class-conscious society, they still managed to perform so well. However, with time, the attitude of the British towards Indians changed considerably and the bond of trust between the officers and men weakened and eventually snapped, resulting in the Mutiny of 1857. Although the Madras Army had not rebelled, the Madras Officer Corps had deteriorated to such an extent that it could never recover its former reputation.

It was towards the end of the Mysore Wars that five battalions of Madras Infantry were raised that would go on to form 8th Punjab Regiment in 1922. The first of these (1st Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 1/8th Punjab) was raised at Masulipatam on 9 November 1798, as 3rd Extra Battalion of Madras Native Infantry by Captain Alexander MacLeod. The nucleus of the battalion was made up of a draft of ten subedars, ten jemadars, forty havildars,

forty naiks, fourteen drummers and 200 privates furnished by 2/2nd, 2/7th, 1/8th, 2/8th, 1/10th, 1/11th and 2/11th Regiments; the bulk of the draft coming from the 8th Regiment.[31] The battalion was known as MacLeod ki Paltan. With the increase in responsibilities of the Army due to territorial gains after the conquest of Mysore, orders were issued on 14 December 1799, to raise three new regiments to be designated as the 15th, 16th and 17th Regiments of Native Infantry. The 1st Battalion 15th Regiment Madras Native Infantry (1/15th MNI) was formed from 3rd Extra Battalion and placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Ure.[32]

2nd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (2/8th Punjab) was raised by Captain TK Crewe at Masulipatam in April 1799, for duties at that station. It was called Masulipatam Battalion or Crewe ki Paltan and consisted of ten companies of 75 men each. The battalion was principally composed of men from the French Contingent at Hyderabad.[33] On formation of the 15th Regiment, it became 2nd Battalion 15th Regiment Madras Native Infantry (2/15th MNI). It was supplemented by drafts from 2/7th, 2/9th and 1/12th Regiments, and the Native Corps at Amboyna. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Coke was appointed Commanding Officer. Colonel Robert Croker became Colonel of the 15th Regiment.[34]

3rd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (3/8th Punjab) was raised as 1st Battalion 16th Regiment Madras Native Infantry (1/16th MNI) by Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Jennerett at Trichinopoly on 1 January 1800, from drafts furnished by 1/1st, 1/2nd, 1/5th, 2/5th, 1/6th, 1/7th, 1/8th and 1/13th Regiments. It was known as Jennerett ki Paltan.[35] 4th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (4/8th Punjab) was raised as 2nd Battalion 16th Regiment Madras Native Infantry (2/16th MNI) by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Dyce at Madura on 1 January 1800, from drafts furnished by 2/3rd, 1/4th, 2/4th, 2/6th, 1/7th, 1/9th and 2/13th Regiments. It was known as Dyce ki Paltan. Colonel George Fotheringham was appointed to the command of 16th Regiment.[36]

5th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (5/8th Punjab) was raised as 1st Battalion 17th Regiment Madras Native Infantry (1/17th MNI) at Guntoor (Guntur), also on 1 January 1800, from drafts furnished by 2/1st, 2/2nd, 2/5th, 1/8th, 1/9th, 1/10th, 1/11th, 2/11th and 2/12th Regiments. Lieutenant Colonel William Kinsey was appointed Commanding Officer of the battalion, while Colonel George Wahab was appointed Colonel of the 17th Regiment, giving his name to the 1st Battalion (Wahab ki Paltan).[37]

In May 1824, it was decided to revert to the old system of single-battalion regiments, and the five battalions were re-designated as 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Regiments of Madras Native Infantry.[38] In 1885, the word 'Native' was deleted from the nomenclature of all Indian Army units. Between 1890 and 1893, these battalions were reconstituted as Burma Battalions, and in 1903, they were converted into Punjabi regiments. With the introduction of Regimental Group System in the Indian Army in 1922, the five battalions were grouped together as 8th Punjab Regiment. In the narrative that follows, the battalions are referred to by the designations they were holding at the time of the event being described. Their genealogy is given in Appendix I.

2
Early Campaigns

Within fifty years of their victory at Plassey, the British had emerged as the paramount military power in India. The Commercial Enterprise now became an Imperial Quest, as men like the Marquess Wellesley resolutely set about to win an empire for Britain. In 1806, on the death of the enfeebled Mughal King Shah Alam II—a pensioner of the East India Company, the British ordered his successor to give up all imperial pretensions. The British now reigned supreme in most of India. Only the Mahrattas remained to be subdued, and by 1818, their power too was broken.

As the Company consolidated its gains in India and made forays overseas, the newly raised battalions of the future 8th Punjab Regiment faced their first challenges on the battlefield. Among the first to see action was 1/15th Madras Native Infantry (1/8th Punjab), which was called out several times between 1800 and 1814, to suppress revolts in the Rajahmundry District.[1] The 2/15th Madras Native Infantry (2/8th Punjab) was also engaged in suppression of a revolt in the Ceded Districts south of the Tungabhadra in 1800-01.[2]

The Poligar Rebellion 1801

Since 1749, the Poligars (local feudal chieftains) of Madura and Tinnevelly in the extreme south of the Indian Peninsula had been resisting the authority of Nawab of Carnatic, a client of the British. In 1798, they again rebelled and the British despatched a force under Major John Bannerman to the rebel stronghold of Panjalamkurchi. The fortress was captured and its walls demolished, while several rebel leaders were executed or imprisoned in the fort of Palamcottah. However, on 2 February

1801, several Poligars escaped from Palamcottah to Panjalamkurchi, where they were joined by 4000 rebels. A force of 900 men under Major Colin Macaulay marched immediately to suppress the outbreak; only to find the walls of the fort rebuilt, and the rebels well-entrenched. Macaulay was forced to retreat to Palamcottah. As the rebellion spread, reinforcements were despatched, which included a company of 2nd Battalion 16th Regiment Madras Native Infantry or 2/16th MNI (4/8th Punjab) under Captain Donald McDonnell.

On 31 March, the British force arrived at Panjalamkurchi. A breach was made in the walls by the artillery and the fort was stormed. However, the storming party was unable to find a footing at the top of the breach, while the rebels hiding inside the hollow bastions of the fort used their 18-foot pikes with deadly effect against the assaulting sepoys. The attack was repulsed with heavy casualties including six sepoys of 2/16th MNI, who were wounded.[3] Major Macaulay was forced to withdraw and wait for further reinforcements. These arrived on 21 May and three days later, the assault was resumed and the fort was taken after desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The bastions were destroyed by hand grenades and a sally by 3000 defenders was repulsed. The Poligars withdrew into the jungle and desultory fighting continued till October, when the rebel leaders were captured and executed.[4]

Second Mahratta War 1803-5

The Mahrattas are natives of south-western India and first gained prominence in the 17th century under the leadership of the charismatic Sivaji, who established a kingdom centred at Poona. As Mughal authority weakened, the Mahrattas occupied large swathes of territory, while their marauding bands of light horsemen wreaked havoc in North and Central India. However, Sivaji's successors were unable to control the fractious Mahratta chieftains,

who carved out their own fiefdoms. Soon, the Mahratta Empire split into five major power bases: the Gaikwars of Baroda in the west, the Scindias of Gwalior in the north, the Bhonslas of Berar in the east, and the Holkars of Indore in the centre. The hereditary Peshwas or viziers, who were also nominal heads of the Mahratta Confederacy, were based at Poona in the southwest. Although ill-organized and suspicious of each other, the Mahrattas could field a formidable army, which included a large number of Arab and Pathan mercenaries and well-trained infantry led by European and American officers.

British interference in Mahratta affairs began in 1774, when taking advantage of dissent among Mahratta chiefs, they attacked and occupied the fort of Thana on the island of Salsette near Bombay. Soon, a British force was marching to Poona to install a rival contender for the Peshwa-ship. A series of engagements followed but failed to defeat the Mahrattas. However, by 1800, having subdued Mysore and Deccan,[5] the British were determined to break the power of the Mahrattas. The opportunity soon presented when internecine war again broke out among the Mahrattas in 1801. The Peshwa Baji Rao II was defeated in the civil war and fled to the British for protection. In return, he allowed the British to place a large subsidiary force at Poona. In May 1803, a British force commanded by Major General Arthur Wellesley[6] advanced towards Poona and reinstated Baji Rao.

This led to open war with Scindia of Gwalior and Bhonsla of Berar.[7] In August, General Wellesley attacked from the south and routed the Mahrattas in a series of engagements at Ahmednagar, Assaye and Argaum. General Lake, the British Commander-in-Chief in India, attacked in the north and won hard-fought victories at Aligarh, Delhi and Laswaree, freeing the people of North India from the depredations of Mahratta hordes. A belated entry into the fray by the hitherto neutral Holkar ultimately ended in disaster at Dieg in November 1804. By early 1805, the

Mahrattas were forced to sue for peace. The British imposed humiliating terms on the Mahratta chieftains, who besides ceding parts of their territories, also had to endure British resident officers and troops on their soil. The British victory had dealt a decisive blow to Mahratta power in North India.

In 1803, the 1st Battalion 17th Regiment of Madras Native Infantry or 1/17th MNI (5/8th Punjab) marched from Madras to join Lieutenant General James Stuart's force, then preparing to invade the southern Mahratta states.[8] In the summer of 1803, as General Wellesley attacked Ahmednagar, the battalion formed part of Major General Campbell's Corps of Observation at Moodgul in the Raichoor Doab.[9] In December, General Campbell's forces subdued the Poligar of Jelloor, who had been plundering the countryside. A few days later, Campbell received news of another irruption in the Doab. A large force of 10,000 Mahratta freebooters under Mohammed Beg Khan, the self-styled Dhoondia, was advancing towards Company territory. General Campbell marched from Woodapoory on 28 December with a force, which included the 1/17th MNI and crossing the River Malpurba at Jellahal, surprised a detachment of Dhoondia's cavalry. Next day, after a night march of thirty miles, he launched a surprise dawn attack on Dhoondia's camp near Hunmunsagar. Two thousand freebooters were killed and more than a thousand, including Dhoondia were wounded or taken prisoner. The British casualties were minimal.[10]

Minor Operations 1804-12

Chittoor Pollams 1804: The Poligars of Chittoor in southern India revolted in 1801 over tax increases by the British. In June 1804, a brigade that included 1/16th MNI (3/8th Punjab) was despatched to suppress the rebellion. Two companies of 1/16th MNI under Captain Charles Armstrong were engaged in attacks on the forts of Pulloor and Sundoor Condah and suffered eighteen casualties

including five killed. Another three were wounded in a failed attack on the hill fort of Mograul in November. The rebellion was soon brought under control.[11]

Malabar and Canara 1805: British occupation of the Malabar Coast (modern Kerala) had faced stiff resistance, especially from Pychy Raja of the Wynaad, who had been in open rebellion since 1799. Several thousand Bombay troops employed in the region had been unable to control the uprising. After a fresh outbreak in 1804, General Wellesley assembled a field force of Madras Army in Malabar, which included 1/17th MNI (5/8th Punjab). It took a year's hard fighting and vast sums of money to quell the rebellion, which finally ended on 30 November 1805, with the death in action of the valiant Pychy Raja.[12]

The Travancore War 1808-9: Affairs on the Malabar Coast remained unsettled and rebellion again flared up in 1808, this time in the south. The Raja of Cochin had become a vassal of the British in 1791, while the Raja of Travancore had accepted British suzerainty in 1805. Both had promised to pay an annual tribute in return for British protection. The British stationed subsidiary forces in the two states and appointed resident officers to oversee their affairs. By 1808, Travancore was in arrears of its payment of the annual tribute. The Resident, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Macaulay demanded prompt payment of the arrears and insisted on disbandment of some state infantry units to raise the money. The demand was rejected by the Diwan (vizier) and in December 1808, open rebellion broke out in Travancore. The insurrection soon spread to Cochin, and the British garrison there under Lieutenant Colonel John Chalmers found itself under attack by thousands of tribesmen and the state forces of Travancore. Reinforcements including 1/17th MNI (5/8th Punjab) were despatched from Madras, and the battalion embarked at Tellicherry for Cochin on 30 December, arriving there in early January 1809.

On 19 January, a large force of rebels attacked the town of Cochin, which was being defended by six companies of 1/17th MNI and fifty men of 12th Foot under the command of Major WH Hewitt of 1/17th MNI. Major Hewitt and his men repulsed the attack after a gallant and skilful defence. In a despatch to the Resident, Major Hewitt described the action: "… the detachment HM's 12th Regiment, and the six companies 1st Battalion 17th Regiment under my command, were attacked by three columns of the enemy on three different points about 6 o'clock this morning, and after a very severe engagement of three hours, we repulsed them on all sides with considerable slaughter, and captured their two guns … from what I could observe in the field of action, the enemy's forces appeared about 3000 excellent disciplined troops, but from what I can collect from report, they amounted to much more".[13]

In a second despatch, Hewitt gave further details of the action: "… the enemy advanced along the glaces in sub-divisions in most perfect order, with a six pounder in front of their centre … a four pounder flanking us … I drew my party up under cover of a small part of the glaces, and at the distance of thirty paces gave them a volley of musketry, and charged them with the bayonet, they gave us two rounds from the gun, some from their fire locks and ran away". This disposed off the first column. The other two columns captured the fort, and "… I despatched Captain Jones with a company to take them on their right flank, (which he did with great value) … they ran in all directions … their loss amounts in killed and wounded to about 300 men".[14] The casualties of 1/17th MNI were ten privates killed and 45 wounded in addition to Captain John Reid, who died of his wounds. For this gallant action, the battalion was later awarded the Battle Honour of 'Cochin'.[15]

In mid-January, a force of 3000 was assembled in the south of Travancore under Lieutenant Colonel A Sentleger to relieve pressure on Lieutenant Colonel Chalmers' force. Five companies

of 2/16th MNI (4/8th Punjab) formed part of this force. The two forces converged on Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, while another force entered Cochin, forcing the Raja to come to terms and bringing an end to the rebellion.

The White Mutiny 1809:[16] Madras Army officers had long-standing grievances because of the discrimination they suffered in pay and promotion compared to officers of the British Army. There "also existed a well-marked tendency to combine and agitate for redress of grievances".[17] The discontent was aggravated in 1809, when the Governor abolished the tent contract system, which had allowed officers to make profits on supply purchases. General H Macdowall, the Commander-in-Chief of Madras Army protested the measure and resigned after quarrelling with the Governor. Poor handling of the affair by the Government triggered what came to be known as the 'White Mutiny', when officers of the Madras Establishment refused to obey orders. However, in the end, the mutiny fizzled out as both the King's officers, as well as the sepoys did not support the rebellious Madras officers.

The mutiny broke out at Masulipatam on 25 June 1809 and soon spread to other stations. The Government asked all officers of Madras Army to sign an Oath of Fidelity. At Trichinopoly, all officers of 2/16th MNI (4/8th Punjab) except Major McDonnell, the Commandant, refused to sign the oath and were removed. The situation was soon brought under control in most of the presidency. However, at Seringapatam, the garrison mutinied on 29 July and took over the fort. The mutineers seized the government treasury and barricaded themselves inside the fort. Forming part of the garrison was 2/15th MNI (2/8th Punjab) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Munro.

On 11 August, 8 companies of 1/8th MNI under Captain Hugh McIntosh and 7 companies 1/15th MNI (1/8th Punjab) under Captain FK Aiskill marched from Chittledrug to join the mutinous garrison at Seringapatam. The Indian officers and sepoys were

unaware of the real intentions of their British officers. The column was surprised by British and Mysore troops outside Seringapatam and suffered heavy casualties. A sally made by Colonel Munro to rescue the detachment was ineffectual. Another sally by Captain John Turner of 2/15th MNI resulted in his being wounded and several of his men killed. The detachment was able to escape into the fort under the cover of artillery.

On 23 August, the fort of Seringapatam surrendered unconditionally, bringing to an end this rather sordid episode in the history of the British Indian Army. Only three officers were chosen for court-martial, while eighteen were given a choice between dismissal and trial. All the rest were granted amnesty. Of the twenty-one officers who were not pardoned, the majority were restored after dismissal, without any effect on their careers. These included Lieutenant Colonel Munro of the 2/15th MNI. Captain Aiskill, however, was not restored, while Captain Turner died before the trial from wounds suffered on 11 August.

Malwa 1810: Amir Khan was a Pathan soldier of fortune in command of a large army of freebooters based in Malwa. In 1809, he invaded Nagpur. On 10 February 1810, a large British force, which included 1/16th MNI (3/8th Punjab), moved from Jaulna and occupied Seronge, Amir Khan's capital. Amir Khan took refuge in Indore, and the British force was withdrawn.[18]

Northern Circars 1810-12: Between 1810 and 1812, detachments of 1/16th MNI (3/8th Punjab) were frequently engaged in operations against refractory landlords of Vizagapatam and outlaws in the neighbourhood of Rajahmundry in Northern Circars on the eastern coast of India.[19]

Organizational Changes 1811-19

In 1811, orders were given to convert four battalions of Madras Infantry into Light Infantry. To keep them in readiness for

active service, these elite units were given special perks and privileges and were subject to more rigorous standards of selection and training. Light Infantry battalions were to take precedence over all other units of native infantry, wore distinctive uniforms and were exempt from fatigue and other ordinary duties of the cantonment except in exceptional circumstances. The 1st Battalion 16th Regiment (3/8th Punjab) was one of the four selected units and was styled as Trichinopoly Light Infantry. The reason for their selection was a twenty-five-mile forced march, when they had arrived in support of a retreating force; just in time to turn the tables in a minor engagement near Mysore. The battalion's motto was, 'Now or Never'.[20]

In the same year, a new pattern of knapsack was introduced. The list of necessary items to be carried in the knapsack makes interesting reading: "3 white jackets, 3 pairs of drawers, 2 pairs of knee bands, 2 handkerchiefs, 2 *dupattahs,* 2 *loongies*, 1 flat dish, 2 basins, emery, whiting, blacking or heel-ball, pipe clay, 1 carpet, small size, and neatly folded, to be placed on the top of the knapsack, over which the watch-coat is to lie horizontally, and both attached to the knapsack by the long straps, and 1 jumbo to be slung from the sepoy's right shoulder".[21] One can only guess at the utility of some of these "necessaries". Haversacks were also introduced for carrying rice.

The post of 'Black' or Native Commandant had been abolished in 1785 because they were considered either dangerous, or useless, depending on their level of intelligence. However, need was felt for a suitable replacement, and in 1819, the rank of Subedar Major was introduced. Although initially his responsibilities were rather vague, with time, the Subedar Major came to be an important link in the chain of command as the commanding officer's advisor and assistant. In the same year, knowledge of 'Hindostanee' (Urdu) was made compulsory for all officers being considered for staff appointments.

Third Mahratta and Pindari War 1817-19

The Pindaris were a loose confederacy of bandits, who flourished in Central India in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They had no ethnic or religious affiliations and were united only by the prospect of plunder. Originally formed on break-up of the Mughal armies, their numbers had steadily grown and at any given time amounted to as many as 30,000 men. They were divided into various *darras* or divisions led by their own chieftains. Some of them like Amir Khan had large well-organized armies numbering several thousand.[22] The principal arm of the Pindaris was the light horse. They usually congregated in Malwa and left their lairs amidst the hills and forests between the River Narbada and the Vindhya Mountains in November to raid far and wide. The Pindaris were superb horsemen, who unencumbered by baggage, moved with lightning speed, converging on their target from several directions, and vanished into their mountain fastness after looting and pillaging. Many local princes including the Mahrattas utilized their services from time to time to ravage the countries of their rivals.

As the Pindari depredations spread into British territory, they decided to end the menace once and for all. In August 1817, two large armies were assembled at Kanpur and Hyderabad, Deccan. The Grand Army at Kanpur consisted of 40,000 troops divided into four divisions under Lord Hastings, the Governor General, while the Army of the Deccan at Hyderabad consisted of 70,400 men in seven divisions under Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Hilsop. The theatre of war stretched across Central India between the Jumuna in the north and the Krishna and Tungabhadra in the south. The two armies operating from north and south were to trap and crush the Pindaris between them, while at the same time keeping an eye on the Mahrattas.

In September, the two armies began their operations. Scindia of Gwalior, on being confronted by the Grand Army, decided to come to terms, while Amir Khan also capitulated in return for being recognized as the ruler of the State of Tonk. In the meantime, the divisions of the Army of the Deccan, acting from several points, pressed upon the remaining Pindari *darras* and chased them out of southern Malwa. Relentlessly pursued, with their escape routes blocked and their leaders killed or captured, the Pindaris broke up and dispersed. Two 8th Punjabi battalions marched out with the Army of the Deccan: 2/15th MNI (2/8th Punjab) as part of 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 4th (Poona) Division commanded by Brigadier General Lionel Smith, and 1/16th Trichinopoly Light Infantry or 1/16th TLI (3/8th Punjab) as part of the Light Brigade of the 1st (Advanced) Division under General Hilsop. Another battalion, 1/17th MNI (5/8th Punjab) was also involved in operations against the Pindaris, when in November 1817, its flank companies under Captain William Pickering marched from Cannanore "to dislodge a predatory body of Pindaris", which they accomplished "after a severe encounter". However, the battalion does not seem to have taken any further part in the operations.[23]

Defeat of the Peshwa: The Mahrattas had been smarting from their defeat in 1804. Foremost among the disgruntled Mahratta chieftains was the Peshwa Baji Rao II, who felt it was an opportune time to arouse the Mahrattas, while British attention was focused on the Pindaris. When the attitude of the Peshwa became threatening, the British subsidiary force at Poona withdrew to a ridge at Kirkee. On 5 November 1817, the Peshwa's forces numbering around 26,000 advanced towards the 2800 British troops under Colonel CB Burr. In an unexpected and bold move, Colonel Burr attacked the advancing Mahrattas, who promptly bolted from the battlefield. A few days later, Captain William Vaughan of 2/15th MNI and his brother were brutally murdered

after being captured by a party of Mahratta horse near Poona, while on their way to join the battalion.

On 13 November, General Smith arrived at Kirkee with the 4th Division. With him came three companies of 2/15th MNI as part of the 2nd Infantry Brigade. Four days later, the 4th Division marched towards Poona. The Peshwa and his army again fled from the field and the city was taken without any resistance. On 21 November, General Smith set out in pursuit of the Peshwa, closely followed by the Reserve Division under Major General Pritzler. On 17 December, the 4th Division arrived at Seroor, where it was joined by the rest of 2/15th MNI under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Boles. The two divisions converged on Satara, capital of Sivaji's heirs, and on 10 February 1818, the city surrendered. Here, 2/15th MNI, now part of the Bombay Brigade, was detached from the 4th Division to join the Reserve Division.

While the 4th Division resumed its pursuit of the Peshwa, the Reserve Division set out to pacify the surrounding countryside. On 20 February, it arrived before the formidable hill fortress of Sinhgarh. Here, four companies of 2/15th MNI left for garrison duties at Poona. The fort of Sinhgarh surrendered on 1 March after heavy artillery bombardment. Leaving behind two companies of 2/15th MNI under Lieutenant William Eyles at the fort, the division next marched on to the hill fortresses of Viziergarh and Purandhar. Both the forts surrendered without much resistance. Two companies of 2/15th MNI were deputed to garrison the captured fort of Purandhar. The Reserve Division then resumed the tedious task of reducing various fortresses and chasing fleeing bands of Mahrattas and Pindaris.[24]

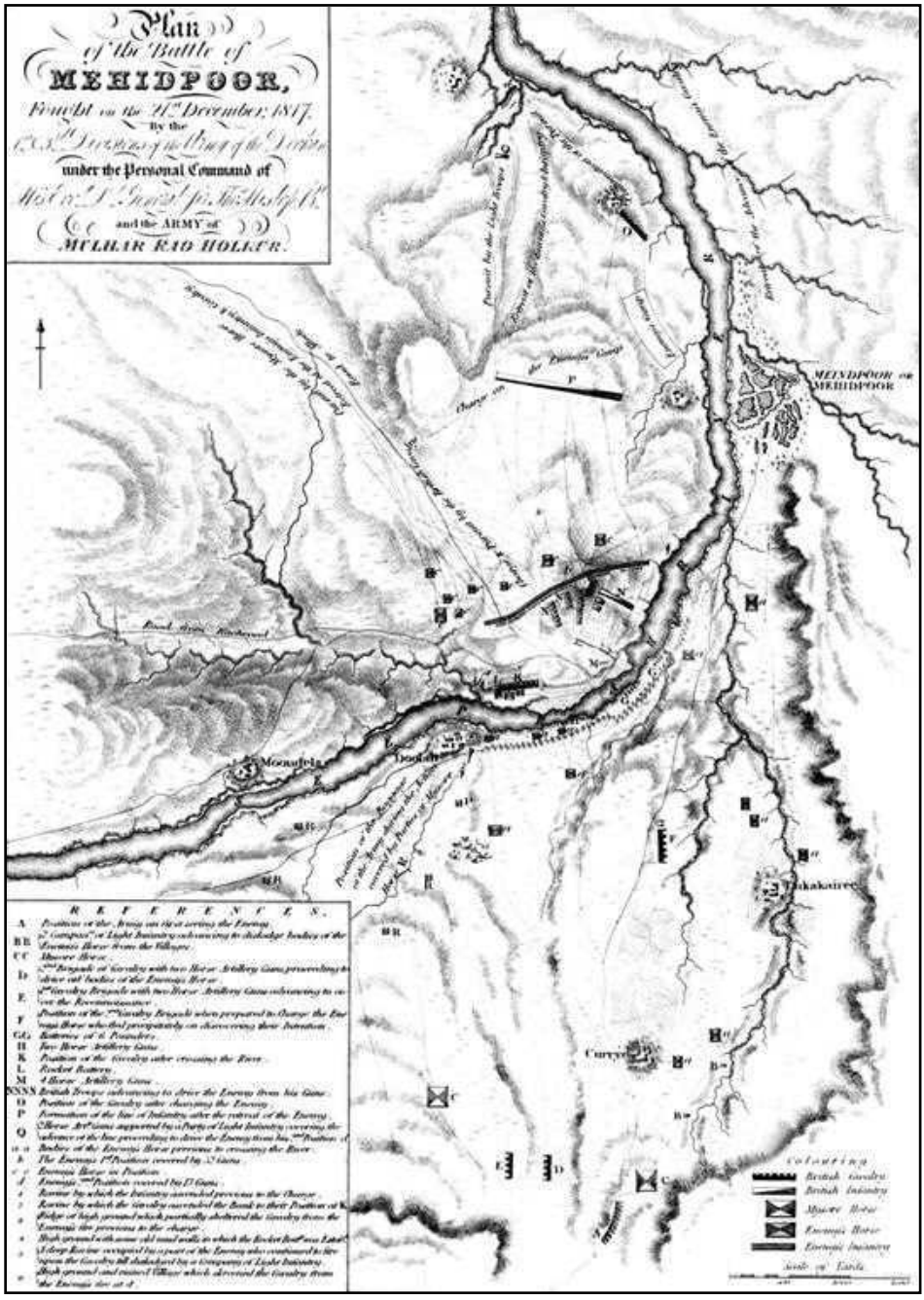
The Battle of Mahidpur: When news of the Peshwa's revolt reached Berar and Indore, Mahrattas of these two states turned openly hostile towards the British. Brigadier General Doveton advanced towards Berar with the 2nd Division and defeated Bhonsla's army at Sitabaldi on 16 December 1817. A few days

later, Nagpur, the capital city of Berar, capitulated. Meanwhile towards the west, Indore at that time was being governed by the regent Tulsi Bai due to the minority of the Holkar. The regent was reluctant to go to war, but the militant faction murdered her and started preparing for war.

In the meantime, General Hilsop advanced towards Ujjain with the 1st and 3rd Divisions of the Army of the Deccan to keep an eye on the Mahrattas of Indore. An effort was made to negotiate a settlement with the Holkar's ambassadors but was unsuccessful. On 20 December, the British marched towards the Mahratta Army encamped outside the village of Mahidpur. General Hilsop's force was drawn mostly from the Madras Army and consisted of around 5500 men. It included Trichinopoly Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab) with a complement of ten officers and 563 other ranks. The Mahratta force totalled more than 35,000 men, with 30,000 cavalry and 5000 infantry besides some 100 artillery pieces.[25]

Moving along the right bank of River Sipra, Hilsop's force came in sight of the Mahratta camp on the morning of 21 December. The Mahratta forces were drawn on the left bank of the river, opposite the fort of Mahidpur, with the artillery deployed in front of the infantry. Their left flank rested on a bend in the river, which was not fordable at that point, while a ravine sheltered the right flank. Some of the cavalry was behind the infantry, while the bulk of it was deployed on the right flank with guns and matchlock men in front. The key of the position was a ruined village in the centre directly in front of a ford. It was filled with infantry and flanked by artillery.

At 1030 hours, a company of Trichinopoly Light Infantry along with some cavalry, advanced towards the village of Dulait to reconnoitre the enemy's position. They discovered that opposite the enemy's centre, the river was fordable by large bodies of men. General Hilsop decided to launch his attack at this point. At the same time, small bodies of Mahratta cavalry crossed the river in



2. The Battle of Mahidpur.

order to attack the British baggage train but were driven off by skirmishers from Trichinopoly Light Infantry. At 1100 hours, the Light Brigade, which included the Trichinopoly Light Infantry, was moved to the front under the command of Major Henry Bowen, the Commandant of Trichinopoly Light Infantry. The Army resumed its march with the Horse Artillery leading, followed by the Light Brigade and the 1st Infantry Brigade, with the Mysore Horse on the left. The lead column was commanded by Brigadier General John Malcolm.

At around 1200 hours, when the lead column reached the village of Lukkaira, another body of Mahratta horse was observed on the right bank in front of the ford. Four companies of Trichinopoly Light Infantry supported by the Horse Artillery moved ahead to clear the bank. As soon as the Light Brigade reached the ford, they came under fire from Mahratta artillery, which was about 700 meters away. Major Bowen immediately forded the river with his brigade and took up position in a ravine. He was followed by the Horse Artillery, the cavalry and the 2nd Infantry Brigade. However, due to some confused orders, the 1st Infantry Brigade did not cross the river for another hour.[26] The delay left the Light Brigade's right flank exposed and they suffered considerable losses due to enemy fire. The decision to send in the Horse Artillery was also inexplicable as the entire detachment was almost wiped out by the superior firepower of the Mahrattas.

By the time the 1st Infantry Brigade started forming up on the right of his brigade, Major Bowen had launched his attack against the enemy's centre. The ruined village in the centre was taken by 1/16th Trichinopoly Light Infantry and 1/3rd Madras Light Infantry, and the flank guns were overrun by the Rifle Corps and the 1st Brigade. The charge was "carried out at the point of the bayonet" with great courage; the sepoys "charging up to the muzzles of guns without hesitation" in the face of heavy enemy fire. The Mahratta gunners stood their ground to be bayoneted but

the infantry wavered and were soon driven from their positions. The fabled Mahratta cavalry again bolted from the field without putting up a fight. The rout of the Mahratta Army was complete, and a huge amount of booty was captured. The entire action had lasted about three hours. The Mahrattas lost more than 3000 men, while the British casualties were 174 killed and 621 wounded: mostly in the Light Brigade. The losses of Trichinopoly Light Infantry were seventeen killed and 76 wounded including six officers.[27] The battalion was awarded the Battle Honour of 'Maheidpoor' and Major Bowen was appointed Companion of the Order of the Bath.

On 27 December, General Malcolm led a detachment, which included the 1/16th TLI, to Mandesar, capturing the bazaars and supplies of the Holkar. A few days later, the Mahrattas capitulated. Leaving General Malcolm with the 3rd Division in Malwa to continue operations against the Pindaris, General Hilsop left for Deccan with the 1st Division. On 27 February 1818, he reached the Mahratta fortress of Thalner on the banks of River Tapti and was fired upon. The fort was captured after some fighting in which two sepoys of 1/16th TLI were wounded. One company of 1/16th TLI was left at Thalner to garrison the fort, while the rest of the battalion was transferred to Brigadier General Doveton's 2nd Division, then operating in Berar. After taking part in several minor engagements, the battalion returned to Nagpur in January 1819. In February, Subedar Noor Sahib of 1/16th TLI was awarded a land grant of fifty cawnies (66 acres) for distinguished service.

Most of 1818 was spent in mopping up operations. Numerous columns hunted down fugitive bands of Pindaris and Mahrattas and reduced isolated mountain forts. Baji Rao surrendered in May, while the Bhonsla of Berar fled to Punjab. With the capture of Asirgarh in April 1819, the war finally concluded, bringing to an end the independence of the Mahrattas.

Ceylon 1818

The British had seized the Dutch colony of Ceylon in 1796. However, their control of the island was restricted to the coastal belt, while the interior of the island remained under the control of the King of Kandy. An effort to subdue Kandy in 1803 ended in failure, when the British were forced to withdraw after suffering badly from sickness. In 1815, there was a rebellion against the king, and taking advantage of the situation, the British occupied the capital city of Kandy without any opposition. However, in 1817, the local chieftains rose up in revolt against British occupation. The terrain and climate again made the task difficult for British troops and the Governor of Ceylon appealed for urgent reinforcements. In March 1818, the Government of Madras despatched a brigade of Madras Infantry to Ceylon, which included 1/15th MNI (1/8th Punjab).

The battalion embarked from Madras on 11 March 1818, with nine officers and 832 rank and file. Major Alexander Limond, the commandant of the battalion, was also temporarily in command of the brigade until the arrival of the brigade commander. The operations, in what was essentially a guerrilla war, were principally in the form of jungle patrols and search and destroy missions by detachments of troops distributed in piquets. The rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed with destruction of villages and livestock, leaving the countryside devastated. In October, with more than 10,000 people dead, the Ceylonese finally submitted to British authority. The troops saw little actual fighting but suffered greatly from heat, exposure and disease. In July1818, 1/15th MNI had 227 men in hospital. Their privations were compounded by issue of rations of poor quality. Although the number of casualties due to military action is not known, the battalion lost 61 men due to disease. In February 1819, the battalion returned to Tuticorin in India.[28]

Reorganization 1824

Recognizing the shortcomings of the reforms of 1796, certain changes were brought about in the organization of the Company's armies in 1824. The system of two-battalion regiments was discontinued, and single-battalion regiments were restored, as the grouping had been of no particular benefit. In Madras Army, this resulted in formation of fifty infantry regiments from twenty-five. The regiments were re-numbered in the order in which they were first raised. The establishment of officers of each regiment was fixed at one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, one major, five captains, ten lieutenants and five ensigns. The changes allowed promotions to run in single battalions and created extra vacancies for colonels and captains and put an end to exchange of officers and men. The one major defect of the previous reforms—the high proportion of British officers in the battalions, was allowed to continue.[29] The new designations of 8th Punjabis were:

1/15th Regiment (1/8th Punjab) became 29th Regiment
2/15th Regiment (2/8th Punjab) became 30th Regiment
1/16th Regiment (3/8th Punjab) became 31st Regiment
2/16th Regiment (4/8th Punjab) became 32nd Regiment
1/17th Regiment (5/8th Punjab) became 33rd Regiment

In 1824, the 33rd Regiment (5/8th Punjab), then commanded by Major George Lancelot Wahab, was inspected by Major General Doveton. The Annual Confidential Report of the battalion makes interesting reading: "The corps performed several manoeuvers with great steadiness and regularity. The firing of Grand Divisions, Wings and by Battalions were exceedingly good, but by Companies was indifferent. The ordinary and quick time were correct, and the several wheelings were steady and close … The privates are in general good looking and clean … The men are generally supplied with yellow cloth pantaloons which when mixed in line with those who have only gray makes a very bad

appearance … The muskets are well flinted and the ammunition carefully preserved. The sword exercise was tolerably well performed by the European Officers, Native Officers, Havildars and Drummers, but the whole still requires considerable practice to become perfect". Major Wahab's efforts unfortunately were not appreciated by the inspecting general as "the manoeuvers selected by him were not such as could have been wished", and he was reported to the Officer Commanding the Garrison.[30]

3
The Burma Wars

As the British consolidated their gains in India, they became increasingly anxious about the safety of their frontiers. Towards their east was Burma, ruled by a belligerent and expansionist dynasty; and towards their west were the turbulent kingdoms of Punjab and Sindh. But for the British, the real threats lay beyond these petty kingdoms. East of Burma were their old nemeses, the French, who the British feared might threaten their trade routes to the East Indies. And west of Punjab were the Afghans, who the British believed were conspiring against them with the Russians—their new bogeymen. As the British went about securing their frontiers, the fate of these states was sealed. And so, while the Bengal and Bombay Armies marched towards the west, the Madras Army was sent east to conquer Burma. Over the next hundred years, the battalions of 8th Punjab Regiment saw regular service in Burma, which became a second home for them.

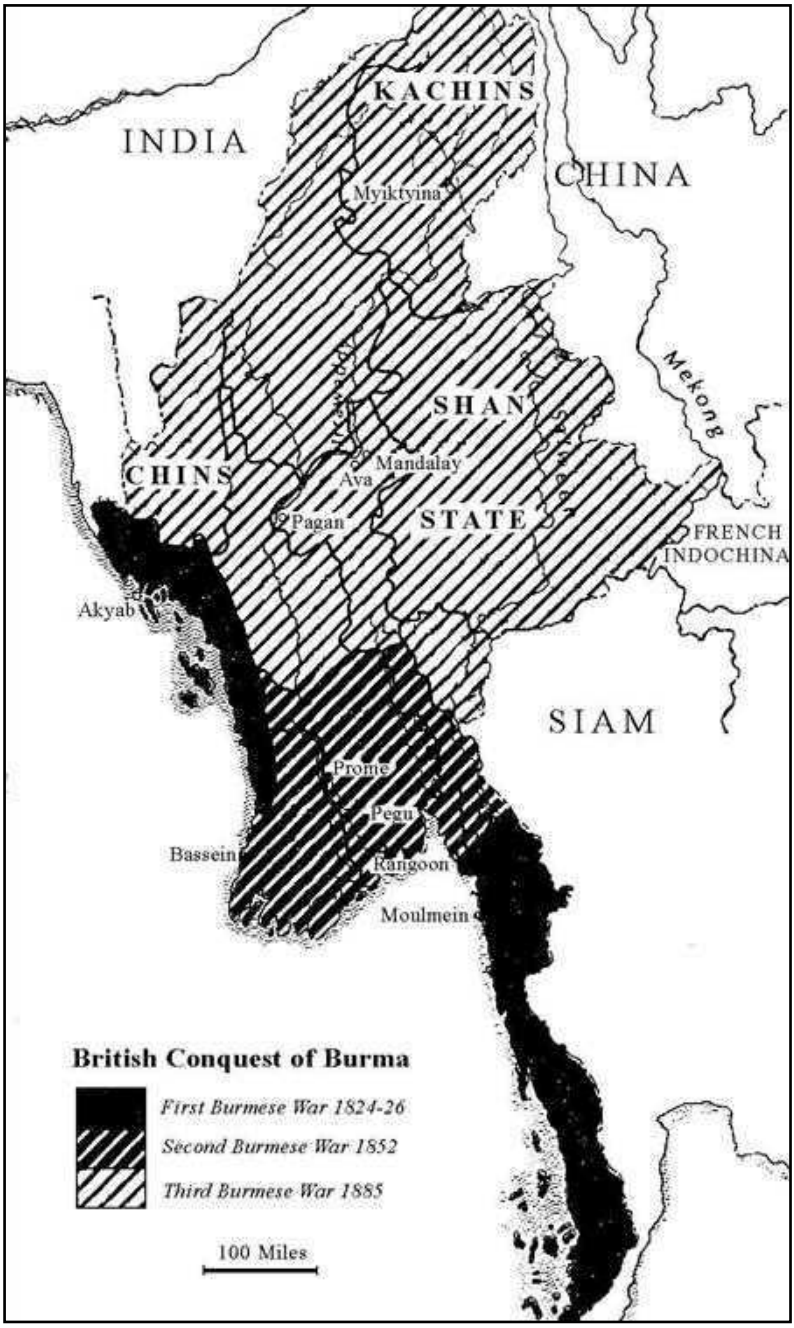
First Burma War 1824-26

The British conquest of Bengal brought them on a collision course with the Kingdom of Burma, which had recently been expanding westwards. In 1785, the Burmese had conquered the Arakan; in 1813, they seized Manipur; and in 1816, the State of Assam became their vassal. Soon, they were threatening Chittagong and Dacca. For several years, relations between the two powers had been acrimonious with frequent border incidents. Matters finally came to a head in early 1824, when the Burmese seized the border post of Shahpuri near Chittagong. On 5 March, the British declared war on Burma.

The British war aims were to expel the Burmese from Assam and to capture their capital city of Ava. They intended to reach Ava by moving along the River Irrawaddy after launching a sea-borne invasion of Burma. The choice of a sea-borne attack was made because of the difficult terrain along the Indo-Burmese frontier. The Burmese Expeditionary Force, which assembled under the command of Brigadier General Sir Archibald Campbell, was 10,644 strong, half of whom were Europeans. Bulk of the Indian troops was from the Madras Army. A large naval flotilla accompanied the expedition.

The Burmese were expecting a land invasion in the Arakan and were completely surprised when the British arrived at Rangoon on 9 May 1824. The city was captured without any opposition. The British, intending to procure supplies and transport in Burma, had not brought any land transport. But on their arrival, the Burmese abandoned the countryside, leaving the force dependant on India for supplies. This greatly delayed the commencement of further operations and inland move was postponed until the end of the rainy season in November. While waiting for the supplies to arrive, General Campbell captured several outlying strongpoints to protect Rangoon. These included Dalla, Kemmendine, the Shwedagon Pagoda and Pazundaung. Several Burmese attacks on British positions were easily repulsed. However, the British troops suffered considerably from tropical diseases, principally malaria, which took a heavy toll.

The Burmese king recalled his forces from Assam and the Arakan and assembled a large army under General Maha Bundula to expel the invaders from Rangoon. The army was almost 60,000 strong with 35,000 musketeers, 20,000 infantry armed with swords and pikes, and several hundred *jingals*[1]—small swivel guns, which were easily handled by two men and could be rapidly moved from one place to another, besides heavier artillery. In addition, they possessed a large number of war-boats, some of them 80-100 feet



3. British Conquest of Burma.

long with an artillery piece mounted on the bow.[2] Their defence was largely restricted to stockades, which they used as fortified positions. These stockades were built of 10-20 feet long beams of teak or bamboo, planted in the ground with loopholes for firearms. They were often augmented by inner or outer ditches planted with sharpened bamboo stakes. While the Burmese armaments might have been primitive, their tactics of guerrilla jungle warfare could be most effective. They were also highly disciplined and motivated.

In September 1824, reinforcements arrived from India and included 30th Regiment Madras Native Infantry or 30th MNI (2/8th Punjab), which landed at Rangoon on 27 September. On 5 October, reports were received of a body of Burmese troops occupying the pagoda at Kaiklu, about 14 miles from Rangoon. The British despatched a force, which included 100 sepoys of 30th MNI and four howitzers, to dislodge the Burmese. Progress of the detachment was impeded all the way by a succession of breastworks on the road, and it did not reach Kaiklu until 1700 hours that evening. With the troops of 30th MNI held in reserve, the detachment approached the stockade but came under intense fire. The detachment was forced to withdraw after suffering heavy casualties, which included a sepoy of 30th MNI, who was wounded. On 9 October, another detachment with troops from 30th MNI was sent to Kaiklu but found the stockade abandoned. A party of 180 men of 30th MNI was left to garrison the stockade and keep the line of communication open.[3]

The Burmese Army in the meantime advanced towards Rangoon, and investing the British position in a semi-circle, entrenched itself. The British position was defended by artillery in the front, naval vessels on the right and the post of Kemmendine on the left. On 1 December, a Burmese attack on Kemmendine was repulsed followed by several other attacks, which were also beaten back. Lack of any offensive activity from the British lulled the

Burmese into a false sense of security, and they crept closer to the British lines. On 7 December, General Campbell, confident of victory, launched his counterattack against the Burmese positions with four columns of infantry. One of the columns, which included 30th MNI, was commanded by their Commandant Lieutenant Colonel Brook B Parlby. At around noon, the attack by infantry commenced following heavy bombardment of the Burmese positions. Colonel Parlby's column advanced from the Shwedagon Pagoda towards the Burmese centre and rushed their entrenchments. The Burmese defence quickly collapsed all along the front and they fled, leaving behind 5000 dead and most of their ordnance.[4]

General Campbell in his despatch to the Government noted that "where all behaved so nobly, I cannot particularize, but must in justice state that Captain Wilson and Lieutenant Colonel Parlby's divisions first made an impression from which the enemy never recovered".[5] One Indian officer and seven other ranks from 30th MNI were wounded in the fighting. Next day, a force, which had been despatched to disperse a body of Burmese troops near Dalla, found several stockades in the vicinity still manned in strength. Reinforcements, including a detachment of 30th MNI were sent under Colonel Parlby with orders "to attack the enemy wherever he might be found".[6] Colonel Parlby assaulted the stockades and drove the Burmese into the jungle. Two sepoys and a *bhisty* (water carrier) from the battalion were wounded in the action.[7]

The Burmese now assembled a force of 25,000 at Kokine, about four miles from the Shwedagon Pagoda. On 14 December, they launched fireships on Rangoon, putting the city on fire. Next day, the British counter-attacked in two columns; the 30th MNI forming part of the left column under General Campbell. While the right column made a detour to take the enemy in the rear, the left column attacked from the front. The Burmese position consisted of

two large stockades connected by a central entrenchment. The right column attacked in the centre from the rear, while the stockades were taken by troops of the left column. The position was easily captured after inflicting heavy losses on the enemy; the entire action lasting about fifteen minutes. In the meantime, British naval vessels captured or destroyed a number of Burmese war-boats and fire-rafts.[8]

Before advancing into the interior, the British decided to secure their rear and the line of communication. Detachments were despatched to clear out positions still held by the Burmese. On 5 February 1825, a column, which included the flank companies of 30th MNI, left for the Burmese stockade at Thantabain on the River Lyne, accompanied by two naval vessels. The column, under Lieutenant Colonel Godwin, arrived at Thantabain the next day and found it strongly defended by about 3000 men. After a cannonade from the ships, the position was assaulted and captured, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. One havildar of 30th MNI was wounded in the action.[9]

Having cleared the country around Rangoon, the British then advanced towards Prome in two columns: one moving by land and the other by boats. In the meantime, General Bundula had withdrawn to Donabyu on the Irrawaddy to reorganize his forces. In late March, the two columns reached Donabyu. On 1 April, the stockades at Donabyu were subjected to intense shelling in which General Bundula was killed. On the death of their general, the Burmese fled into the jungle, leaving behind most of their heavy weapons. A few days later, 30th MNI arrived with several elephants for the commissariat. The march on Prome was resumed, and the city was entered on 25 April, only to find it abandoned and on fire. As negotiations were opened with the Burmese, the British went into camp at Prome for the rainy season. A 'State of the Army' at Prome dated 18 August 1825, lists 30th MNI as having 478 effectives with 112 men on the sick list.[10] In November,

32nd Madras Native Infantry (4/8th Punjab) also arrived in Burma and joined 30th MNI at Prome.[11]

In the meantime, the Burmese had been assembling another army, which they deployed in several divisions around Prome. In November, after rejecting British terms, the main Burmese Army of more than 50,000 approached Prome but was driven away after a series of failed attacks. Leaving 30th MNI to garrison Prome, the British resumed their advance on Ava. As the British approached his capital, the Burmese king finally relented, accepting terms that all but sealed the fate of his kingdom. On 24 February 1826, the Treaty of Yandabo was signed under which the Burmese ceded the Arakan and Tenasserim to the British and renounced their claims over Assam, Cachar and Manipur, besides agreeing to pay an indemnity of ten million rupees. While the war had devastated Burma, it had also cost the British 15,000 lives, most of them due to dysentery and malaria. The campaign was characterized by poor planning and overconfidence, and it was only the fortitude of their troops and the primitiveness of their enemy that had saved the British from an embarrassing outcome. On 7 March, the British forces embarked for India. The Battle Honour of 'Ava' was awarded to 30th and 32nd Regiments Madras Native Infantry. The 32nd Regiment, which was earmarked for the occupation of Tenasserim, was stationed at Tavoy. It was not engaged in any significant fighting.

The Naning War 1831-32[12]

In 1824, the Dutch ceded their possessions in Malacca on the Malayan Peninsula to the British. Towards the east of Malacca was the small State of Naning, which had been granted semi-independent status by the British. However, in 1828, an overzealous British civil servant wrongly reported that Naning, being a part of the Malacca Territory, was withholding tribute from

the British Government. Alarmed by the events, the Penghulu (chief) of Naning declared full independence. In July 1831, orders were sent out to bring the Penghulu to heel.

Malacca was garrisoned by four companies of 29th MNI (1/8th Punjab) and a half company of Madras Artillery. On 5 August, a detachment of 29th MNI comprising of 150 men and two 6-pounder guns under the command of Captain JS Wyllie, advanced towards Tabu, the capital of Naning, about 22 miles from Malacca. Their supplies were sent by boats on the River Malacca. However, due to insufficient water in the river, the supplies could not follow the detachment. Sending a party of coolies to collect the supplies, the detachment moved into the territory of Naning, which consisted of dense jungle and swamps. The soldiers found it heavy going in the jungle, where they were also subjected to sniping by Malay insurgents. Small parties were sent to bring up the supplies but could not get through. On 10 August, with his supplies having run out, Captain Wyllie decided to turn back. The retreating column was harassed all the way by the enemy, who not only kept sniping at them but also put up obstructions on the path by felling trees. These had to be cut to allow the guns to pass. The column finally reached Soongei Pattye, thirteen miles from Malacca, with seventeen wounded. Here, they finally met up with their supplies. The supply party under Havildar Pir Muhammad had been attacked the night before, but the intrepid havildar and his gallant men had beaten back the attack after ten hours of fighting.

As panic spread in Malacca, the party at Soongei Pattye built a stockade around the government bungalow and started clearing the jungle around it. But the Malays erected stockades around it, hemming the force in. Reinforcements were sent but suffered many casualties on the way from enemy's fire. On 19 and 20 August, the Malays launched repeated attacks on the stockade but were driven back. By 20 August, the force was running out of ammunition and there were so many casualties that even the

wounded were forced to fight. Later that day, the Light Company of 29th MNI from Singapore fought its way through to the stockade, but suffered heavy casualties including Lieutenant James White, who later died of his wounds. It was decided to withdraw the detachment and on 25 August, the small force started its retreat through the Rumbeiga Forest. They again faced sniping and obstructions on the path and had to abandon their guns. The column finally cleared the jungle and arrived at Malacca the next morning. A chain of piquets was deployed around the town and the countryside was abandoned to the enemy for the rest of the year.

In January 1832, reinforcements were despatched from Madras. These included the remaining companies of 29th MNI besides 5th MNI, sappers & miners, and artillery. In the meantime, authorities in Malacca had been cutting down the jungle to a width of eighty yards on either side of the road to Naning to keep the line of communication open. On 7 February, the advanced guard of the force started its move towards Rumbeiga. The troops were brought up in small detachments, providing cover to the sappers as they cleared the jungle.

From 17 February onwards, the troops started coming under regular fire. The advance was painfully slow with the road building progressing at a rate of three to four miles a month over the 22 miles to Naning. On 22 March, the force arrived at Soongei Pattye and over the next few days, reduced several stockades in the vicinity. On 29 March, while assaulting the stockade at Ayers Mangis, Lieutenant Edmund Harding of 29th MNI was fatally wounded along with a subedar and three sepoys, who received serious wounds. As the slow advance of the force continued towards Tabu, they were continuously harassed by the Malays and suffered heavy casualties. On 20 April, the offensive had to be halted due to mounting casualties, with 300 soldiers in hospital. Reinforcements were called in and the advance resumed on 25 May. On 14 June, the force finally came to the edge of the

jungle and in sight of the stockaded defences of Tabu across paddy fields. Next day, the stockades were assaulted after subjecting them to intense shelling and the village was captured.

With the capture of his capital, the Penghulu fled, and the messy little war came to an end. However, it was not until March 1834 that he finally surrendered to the British after being promised a pardon. The Naning War has been described as an "unjust and petty campaign". It was also a highly embarrassing one, as a hundred or so poorly armed insurgents kept such a large force on the run for months, inflicting casualties almost at will. It also delayed the British acquisition of trading and extraterritorial rights on the Malayan Peninsula by several years.

The Coorg War 1834

Defiance of the Raja of Coorg, a small state in South India, led to a short but bloody campaign in 1834, in which two 8th Punjabi battalions were engaged. In February 1834, a force of 7000 was assembled under the command of Brigadier General Lindsay to commence operations against the erratic Raja, who had begun hostilities against the British. Due to the poor state of roads, the force was divided into four columns, which were to enter Coorg from different directions and converge on the capital of Mercara. The 31st Trichinopoly Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab) was part of the northern column, while 32nd MNI (4/8th Punjab) advanced with the western column.

On 10 March, 31st TLI marched from Bellary, reaching the border of Coorg on 30 March, where the northern division was assembling under the command of Colonel Gilbert Waugh. Next day, the column entered the territory of Coorg and on 3 April, the leading troops, which included 31st TLI, made contact with the enemy. At noon, the advanced guard arrived in front of the fortified position of Soamwar Pettah. The force launched an attack

on the position but was forced to retreat after a severe mauling. Ensign Charles Babington of 31st TLI was killed in the action. The eastern & western columns were more successful and Mercara was occupied on 6 April. On 10 April, the Raja surrendered to the British. British losses during the campaign were 93 killed and 200 wounded.[13]

Wars were not the only cause of casualties in the Indian Army. Infectious diseases with their high mortality rates were a fact of everyday life in the pre-antibiotic era. Malaria, dysentery and the periodic outbreaks of cholera took a heavy toll of life. In 1845, while moving to Jaulna, 33rd MNI (5/8th Punjab) suffered an outbreak of cholera in which it lost two officers, 67 other ranks and 471 camp followers.[14]

In 1852, the British invaded Burma for the second time and made further territorial gains. The 30th Madras Native Infantry returned to Burma towards the end of the campaign in June 1853 and was stationed at Moulmein.[15] It was not engaged in any fighting. The final act in the conquest of Burma however, had to wait as events in India took centre stage, with the British coming perilously close to losing their newfound empire.

The Great Rebellion 1857-58

The events of 1857 and their causes have been described in much detail in the first volume of this History. Suffice to say here that while it is simplistic to dismiss them as just a mutiny, it is also unrealistic to describe them as a 'War of Independence'. The concept of a Nation State or Nationalism in the modern sense did not really exist in the mid-19th century sub-continent. India had ceased to exist as a political entity more than a hundred years earlier and people from different parts of the sub-continent, divided as they were into often mutually hostile states, saw each other as foreigners. This disunity was the key to British success in India, both before and after 1857.

While the greased cartridges might have been the spark that lit the fire, it was a conflagration that had been building up for years. The increasingly contemptuous and insensitive attitude of the British towards the 'natives', their proselytizing, confiscation of lands, the caste-riddled edifice of the Bengal Army itself—the causes were myriad. And yes, a yearning—even if an ill-defined one, of a people disillusioned with their new masters—to shake off the noose of slavery tightening around their necks. The events caught the British completely by surprise and soon spiralled out of control. The rebels, however, lost because they were disorganized, leaderless and without a well-defined purpose. And because the rebellion was restricted to North and Central India and hardly touched the rest of the country.

For the British, it was touch and go for a while. But they were able to rush in newly recruited troops from the Indus Valley and capitalizing on the inherent weaknesses of the rebel movement, crushed the rebellion. For the Sikhs, it was an opportunity to get even with soldiers of the Bengal Army, who had recently conquered them, while the Muslims were grateful to the British for having delivered them from the tyranny of the Sikhs. Neither felt any sympathy for the people of northern India and both were eager for plunder. It was no surprise then that they took the British side with a relish and were instrumental in crushing the revolt. On the other hand, the attitude in southern India to the events in the north was one of complete indifference.

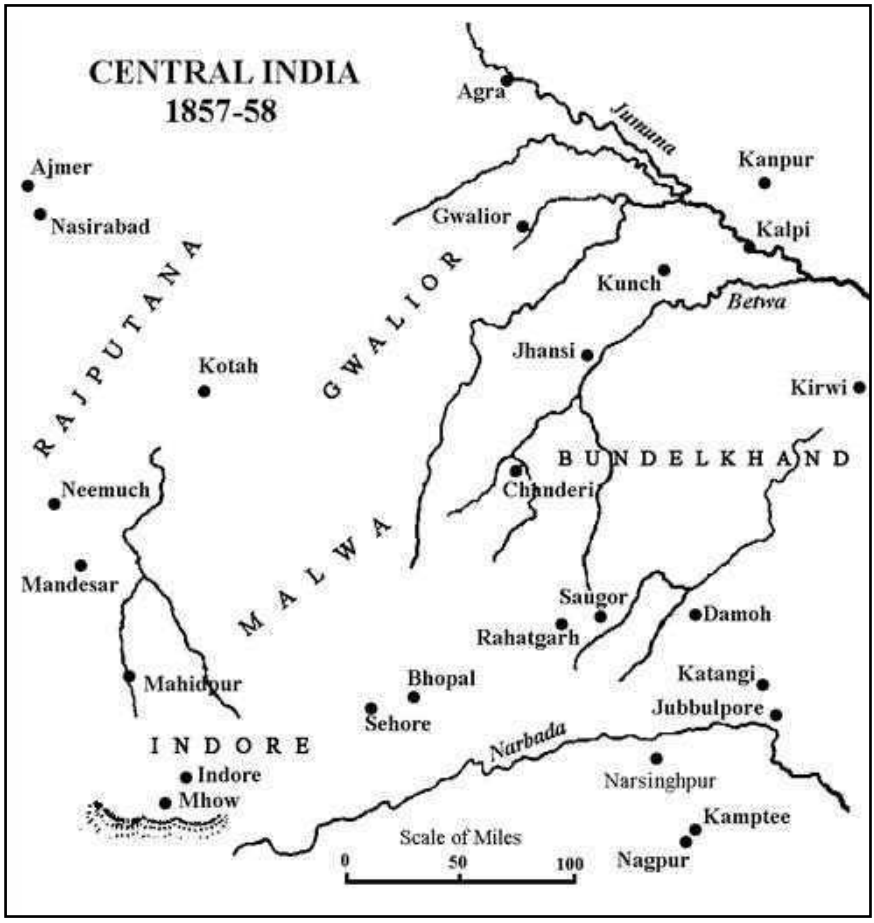
The rebellion broke out at Meerut on 10 May 1857, with the mutiny of 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, and soon engulfed most of North India. The rebels took control of Delhi, Lucknow, Agra and most of Oudh and Rohilkhand, and it took the British more than a year of desperate fighting to regain control in the north. In the meantime, Nana Sahib, a claimant to the Peshwa's title, and Tantia Topi led a Mahratta uprising in Central India. They were joined by various disaffected rajas and chiefs, including the charismatic and

gallant Rani of Jhansi. Although Scindia of Gwalior and Holkar of Indore remained loyal to the British, many of their troops joined the growing army of Nana Sahib and Tantia Topi. Soon, most of Central India between the Rivers Jumuna and Narbada, including Gwalior, Western Malwa, Indore, Bundelkhand and the territories of Saugor and Narbada were out of British control.

The mutiny was largely restricted to the Bengal Army and no units of the Madras Army, and only a few of the Bombay Army were disaffected. Although units of the Madras Army did not play a major role in the British campaign in the north, they were widely employed in operations in Central India. Except for 29th MNI (1/8th Punjab), which was stationed in Malaya, all battalions of the 8th Punjab Regiment saw active service in Central India.

In 1857, 32nd & 33rd MNI (4/8th & 5/8th Punjab) were stationed at Kamptee in Central India. On 13 June 1857, when open rebellion broke out at Nagpur, 33rd MNI was garrisoned in the nearby fort of Sitabaldi. Three hundred men of the battalion under the command of Captain Francis Applegath and Lieutenant FJH Burnes moved into the city and disarmed the mutinous Nagpore Irregular Cavalry without any incident.[16] The mutiny soon spread to the territories of Saugor and Narbada, where several units of the Bengal Army were stationed, and a force called the Nagpore Movable Column was organized to counter the rebellion in these districts. The column, under the command of Colonel John Millar, the Commandant of 33rd MNI, included 425 rank and file of 33rd Regiment besides some cavalry and artillery of Madras Army and a company of irregular infantry. On 17 July, the force moved towards Jubbulpore, arriving there on 30 July, where it was joined by further reinforcements.

The Districts of Saugor and Damoh by now were almost entirely in the hands of the rebels. But due to heavy rains, the column could not leave Jubbulpore until the middle of August. Even then, it was heavy going, as the roads had turned into



4. Central India 1857-58.

quagmires. Elephants were drafted in to drag the guns through the mud. On 29 August, Damoh was relieved. Two days later, Colonel Millar marched towards the fort and village of Balakot, whose ruler Raja Sarup Singh had joined the rebels. After traversing dense jungle, the last four miles up a steep gradient, Colonel Millar's force arrived at Balakot on 1 September, when it was fired upon by the rebels. Two companies of 33rd MNI under Captain Apthorp and 52nd Bengal Native Infantry (BNI) advanced against the village and drove out the rebels. Four sepoys of 33rd MNI were

killed in the action. A few days later, three companies of the battalion destroyed the rebel fort of Hindooria. On 17 September, one company under Lieutenant H Watson surprised the village of Narsingarh, killing seventy rebels. Meanwhile, a hundred men of the battalion formed part of a column, which captured and destroyed the fort of Narsinghpur.

In the meantime, 52nd BNI mutinied at Jubbulpore and Colonel Millar had to abandon Damoh, as he marched towards the mutineers. On 27 September, the column encountered a rebel force of some 1500 and drove it back with considerable loss. Lieutenant Watson was wounded in the action. In November, 33rd MNI was engaged in two more actions and by the end of the month, the districts north of the Narbada had been largely cleared of the rebels. However, a large force of about a thousand rebels based in the hills near Katangi in Jubbulpore was causing a lot of trouble by plundering the nearby villages. On 24 December, 300 men of 33rd MNI under Colonel Millar, supported by detachments of cavalry and artillery, advanced towards the rebel hideout from two directions. On the morning of 26 December, the rebel position was assaulted by the Light and Grenadier companies. The rebels soon gave way and were then pursued by the cavalry. By now, reinforcements were pouring in from different directions and a division of Madras Army under Major General GC Whitlock marched from Nagpur to commence operations in the Saugor and Narbada Districts.[17]

Once the situation in the north was reasonably under control, the British formed the Central India Field Force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose in December 1857. Supported by a column of Bombay Army under Major General HG Roberts operating from Rajputana, and a division of Madras Army under Major General GC Whitlock operating from Jubbulpore in the south, the mission of the Force was to pacify Central India, while

at the same time, protecting the flank of the main British Army north of the Jumuna.[18]

General Rose advanced from Sehore on 27 February 1858, and reaching Jhansi on 21 March, invested the city. But on 31 March, Tantia Topi appeared in his rear with a large Mahratta army. Without relinquishing the siege, General Rose turned and defeated Tantia Topi's army, the bulk of which escaped to Kalpi. Siege of Jhansi was resumed, and the fortress was taken by storm on 3 April. General Rose now marched to Kalpi, where the rebels were defeated after a fierce battle on 22 May. After one last stand at Gwalior on 19 June, where the Rani of Jhansi died a soldier's death, the rebel armies in Central India were finally destroyed, although mopping up operations continued until July 1859.[19]

In the meantime, General Whitlock's division, designated as the Saugor Field Division, assembled at Jubbulpore in November 1857. The mission assigned to him was to cooperate with General Rose, and marching through Bundelkhand, suppress the revolt in that area. The Nagpore Movable Column with 33rd MNI was assigned to the Saugor Field Division. Whitlock's column began its advance from Jubbulpore on 3 February 1858, pacifying the area as it marched through the territories of Saugor and Narbada. Whitlock's advance, however, was hesitant and over-cautious, and he has been accused of "dilatory tactics", and of not cooperating with General Rose, whose appeals for support during the siege of Jhansi and later at Kalpi were largely ignored by him.[20]

On 1 June 1858, General Whitlock marched towards Kirwi, where a large rebel army of 15,000 had assembled. On his approach, the rebels fled and the Raja of Kirwi surrendered. A huge amount of treasure and jewels was captured, which was distributed among the troops as prize money. The 30th MNI (2/8th Punjab) was part of the force that took Kirwi. The battalion later joined the Bellary Field Force, and the men were awarded the

Mutiny Medal with bar for Central India.[21] The remaining two 8th Punjabi battalions were only engaged in minor operations in Central India. The 32nd MNI (4/8th Punjab) served with the Nagpore Movable Column,[22] while 31st Trichinopoly Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab) took part in operations in Gwalior.[23]

The rebellion spelt the end for the East India Company, which was abolished by a Royal Proclamation on 1 November 1858. Appalling atrocities had been committed on both sides, but to the victors go the spoils of war—and the opportunity for revenge. The frenzy of rape, murder and pillage in the wake of British victories has left permanent scars on the psyche of the people of the sub-continent. But the British were quick to learn from their mistakes. As the British Crown took over from the Company, efforts were made to rectify many of the policies, which had led to the events of 1857. Interference in religious and social affairs of the Indians was minimized, while at the same time, all efforts to reform the decadent feudal system were given up. The new pragmatic dispensation was quietly accepted by the Indians, who were stunned by the scale of violence and seemed resigned to their servile fate.

Post-mutiny Military Reforms

Widespread changes were initiated within the military after 1857. Some of these were to appease the Indian soldiers. For example, the sepoys were to be addressed as 'Jawans' and the Indian officers as 'Sardars'. And in 1885, the word Native, being considered pejorative, was dropped from the nomenclature of all army units. Other changes were implemented to ensure that the events of 1857 were not repeated. The arm of artillery was made exclusively British, with the exception of a few mountain batteries, while the ratio of Indian and British troops in India was to be maintained at 2 to 1. And instead of the 'Mixed Class

Composition' or 'General Mixture', 'Class Company' system was introduced whereby each company was to be of one class only. The system was considered a safeguard against mutiny, as companies of different ethnic and religious groups in a regiment would keep a check on each other. Brahmins and Purbeahs (men of eastern provinces) were no longer considered reliable and their place in the new Bengal Army was taken by Punjabi Muslims, Pathans, Sikhs and Gurkhas. Other changes were purely administrative, like the establishment of the Indian Staff Corps by which the officers were no longer borne on the strength of the regiments; thus, streamlining postings and removing discrepancies in promotions.[24]

In 1860, the number of companies in each battalion was reduced to eight, and in 1864, the Grenadier and Light Companies were abolished. The battalion headquarters had a complement of six British officers: commandant, second-in-command, adjutant, quartermaster, medical officer and one general duty officer. The battalion continued to be divided into two 'Wings' or half-regiments of four companies each, commanded by British wing commanders. Each company consisted of ten NCOs, two drummers and 75 jawans under the command of a subedar, with a jemadar as his second-in-command. In 1900, the division of battalions into two wings was replaced with four 'Double-Companies'. Each double-company was commanded by a British major or captain, with another captain or subaltern as his second-in-command besides under-training British subalterns. The companies continued to be commanded by Indian officers. Each company was further divided into four sections of twenty sepoys under a havildar. The complement of British officers was fourteen, with sixteen Indian officers and 900 rank and file.[25]

By the standards of those times, the pay and allowances of the soldiers were quite reasonable. In 1861, the monthly pay of an infantry jawan was Rs. 7 per month, being increased to Rs. 9 in

1895. The pay of a senior subedar in 1877, was Rs. 100 per month and that of a senior jemadar Rs. 50. In addition, they also received extra emoluments from time to time. Pension was payable after 40 years' service until 1886, when this period was reduced to 21 years. The troops had to pay for the cost of their food, clothing and lodgings. Initially, the troops in cantonments built their own lodgings with two to four men sharing a hut. These were often quite flimsy and unsanitary and were eventually replaced by barracks towards the end of the century.[26] An effort was made to keep the Indian Army armed with modern weapons. However, keeping in mind the experience of 1857, the Indians were issued with an improved weapon only when it had been discarded by their British counterparts for a more advanced version.[27]

In 1886, the system of 'Linked Battalions' was introduced under a modification of the Cardwell Scheme. The scheme envisaged linking two to three battalions based on regional affiliations and common traditions. Each group was allotted a regimental depot where one battalion of the group was always stationed. The recruits were enrolled for a group and all troops enlisted in one unit were liable to serve in any unit of the group. The new scheme can be described as the beginning of the regimental system in the Indian Army.[28] The groupings of 8th Punjabis were:

2nd, 29th (1/8th Punjab) & 33rd (5/8th Punjab) Madras Infantry
3rd, 23rd & 31st (3/8th Punjab) Madras Infantry
10th, 25th & 32nd (4/8th Punjab) Madras Infantry
15th, 26th & 30th (2/8th Punjab) Madras Infantry

Although Madras units had remained loyal during the rebellion, their efficiency was already being questioned. Lack of action over the years had brought about deterioration in their efficiency and "stories were current of orders being issued to the old loyal and gallant Madras Army that Commanding Officers were to cease drilling their battalions from their bungalow

verandas clad only in night attire".[29] The star of the Old Coast Army was fading, and between 1860 and 1864, twelve battalions of Madras Infantry were disbanded.

Second Afghan War 1878-80

The Russian conquest of Central Asia in the mid-19th century produced great anxiety among the British in India. By 1875, the Russians had reached the Oxus; and with only Afghanistan separating the two powers, a tussle ensued to gain influence over the hapless Afghans, which came to be known as the 'Great Game'. The Second Anglo-Afghan War was triggered by the Afghan Amir Sher Ali's refusal to receive a British mission to Kabul. The British, having forgotten the lessons of the First Afghan War, invaded Afghanistan in November 1878, and soon occupied most of the country. In May 1879, Sher Ali's son and successor Yaqub Khan signed a treaty relinquishing control of Afghan foreign affairs to the British. There then followed a replay of the events of the first war. Within weeks of its arrival, the British mission to Kabul was massacred by a mob, and after a costly war of retribution, the British again withdrew from Afghanistan in 1881.

In November 1878, the British assembled a large invasion force divided into three columns: the Khyber and Kurram Field Forces in the north and the Southern Afghanistan Field Force at Quetta. The plan of action called for the three columns to attack simultaneously through the mountain passes and to occupy the Kurram Valley and Kandahar. A reserve column for the Southern Afghanistan Field Force, consisting of a division of Bombay and Madras troops was assembled at Sukkur and Jacobabad in Sindh. The division was to supply troops for line of communication and garrison duties. The 30th MNI (2/8th Punjab) under Lieutenant Colonel TC Georges formed part of the Madras Brigade.[30] The

battalion did not take part in any fighting and was mostly employed on line of communication duties, although it remained in the theatre throughout the war. Lack of action caused a lot of disappointment among the Madras troops. It also contributed to the growing scepticism about their fighting abilities, especially as they are alleged to have suffered much from the cold weather of the frontier.[31] The 30th MNI was awarded the Campaign Honour of 'Afghanistan 1878-80' for its services in the Second Afghan War.[32]

In 1882, Egyptian nationalists, resentful of increasing British interference in their internal affairs, seized power in Cairo. The British responded by despatching a military expedition to protect their commercial and strategic interests in Egypt. The expeditionary force included the 31st Trichinopoly Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab). However, the battalion was detached at Aden and held in reserve, taking no part in the fighting. It returned to India in October.[33]

Third Burma War 1885-87

King Thibaw succeeded to the Burmese throne in 1878. He began his reign by executing a large number of his relatives on the plea that they posed a threat to him. This was followed by several years of misrule during which Burma slipped into a state of anarchy and banditry, with central authority all but absent from most of the country. However, it was King Thibaw's hobnobbing with the French that provoked the British into invading Burma for the third and last time. On 10 November 1885, Major General Harry Prendergast's force of some 10,000 invaded Burma and advanced towards the Burmese capital at Mandalay. Meeting little resistance, the British occupied Mandalay on 24 November and deposed the Burmese king. In the meantime, the Burmese Army on approach of the British had melted away to join the bandits

plaguing the countryside. On 1 January 1886, the British announced the annexation of what was left of independent Burma. The proclamation turned the general lawlessness into an anti-British movement, and the British became embroiled in yet another guerrilla war in Burma. It took years of hard fighting and harsh punitive measures to bring the situation under control.[34]

As the insurgency spread in Burma, reinforcements were sent from India, which took the strength of British troops to 30,000, besides more than 8000 Military Police. Their operations consisted of establishing military posts throughout the country and sending 'Flying Columns' of small detachments of troops after rebel leaders and gangs of bandits. It was backbreaking work in extremely difficult conditions, with tropical diseases accounting for most of the casualties. The 30th Madras Infantry (2/8th Punjab) arrived in Burma as reinforcement for the Burma Expeditionary Force in 1886. It was based at Moulmein in the south, with a wing at Toungoo. The battalion returned home in March 1889. It was awarded the Campaign Honour of 'Burma 1885-87' for its services during the campaign.[35]

In February 1887, the 29th Madras Infantry (1/8th Punjab) also arrived at Rangoon in Burma. In January 1888, it moved to Thayetmyo and furnished a number of detachments to various stations. A mounted infantry detachment of sixty men under Lieutenant FJ Nelson was engaged against rebels on both western and eastern frontiers.[36] The British occupied Bhamo in Upper Burma in 1885. The next several years were spent in pacifying the rebellious hill tribe of Kachins in the Districts of Bhamo and Myitkyina. In 1889, a detachment of 32nd Madras Infantry (4/8th Punjab), which had arrived in Burma the previous year, moved out from Bhamo for operations against the Hlegyomaw dacoits. During the punitive expedition, several Kachin villages were destroyed after some stubborn resistance by the tribesmen.[37]

In February 1891, rebels from the Shan State of Wuntho besieged a small British garrison in the town of Kawlin. Reinforcements were hurriedly despatched to relieve the garrison. These included a column of mounted Military Police from Shwebo under Captain Henry D' Urban Keary. The column arrived at Kawlin on 19 February, just as the rebels were assaulting the town from three sides. Captain Keary immediately charged the enemy, who was driven off with heavy losses. He then proceeded to clear the surrounding areas of rebels.[38] Captain Keary was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), while Subedar Prakasa Rae received the Indian Order of Merit (IOM) for conspicuous gallantry at Kawlin. Because of their gallant action at Kawlin, the Shwebo Military Police Battalion was chosen for conversion into a regular battalion. In 1892, when 31st Trichinopoly Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab) was mustered out, it was reconstituted with the Shwebo Battalion.[39] With the suppression of rebellion in Wuntho in 1891, the insurgency in Upper Burma was finally brought under control, although operations against other border tribes continued well into the decade.

4
A Punjabi Renaissance

By the end of the Third Burma War, the Madras Army had been reduced to a mere shadow of its former glory. Years of inactivity had brought about visible deterioration in the standard of efficiency, which was exposed in Burma, where several units performed poorly under fire. This gave ammunition to the "Martial Races"[1] theorists like George MacMunn, who were convinced that South Indians were inherently unwarlike: "It is one of the essential differences between the East and the West, that in the East only certain clans and classes can bear arms; the others have not the physical courage necessary for the warrior".[2] Another critic of the "effeminate peoples of the south" was Lord Roberts, Commander of Madras Army from 1881 to 1885, and Commander-in-Chief, India, from 1885 to 1893: "I tried hard to discover in them those fighting qualities which had distinguished their forefathers during wars of the last and the beginning of the present century. But … I was forced to the conclusion that the ancient military spirit had died in them".[3]

These views were widely shared by the British military establishment, especially in the Bengal Army. They were convinced that there was a racial basis for the difference in military prowess among the various ethnic groups of India. Over the years, these racist theories not only became established facts among the British but also pervaded the psyche of the Indians themselves. British obsession with Martial Races led not only to the demise of Madras Infantry but also left us a legacy of racism for which we paid dearly a hundred years later in 1971.

However, things were not as simple as MacMunn *et al* would have us believe. While it was true that the Madras Army was in a sorry state; there were a number of perfectly good reasons

for it. Garrison duty is hardly the kind of activity designed to keep a force in fighting trim. Disbandment of twelve Madras Infantry battalions in the 1860s had brought about further demoralization among the ranks, as it made service in the Madras Army unreliable, and good recruits became hard to find. But as always, the problem was not with the men, but with the officers who commanded them. In 1881, the number of colonels on Madras Establishment was almost twice the numbers of captains and subalterns *combined.*[4] It was not just that the Madras Army was finding it difficult to attract good officers—it could not find *any* officers. By 1879, most of the Madras regiments did not have any subalterns. Young officers no longer cared to join an army that never went to war. And without their energy and vigour, the army could not maintain its cutting edge. It was no surprise then, that the Madras Army, starved of military action, devoid of young blood, commanded by doddering old men lacking initiative, demoralized and reviled, had become more of an embarrassment than a fighting force. In 1882, a further eight battalions were disbanded and by the start of the First World War, the once proud Old Coast Army had all but vanished.

Since 1857, bulk of the Bengal Army had increasingly been made up of Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Pathans. These men had been largely responsible for the British victory, and the British were completely enamoured with these warlike 'Aryans', who had proven so reliable in their darkest hour. Racial absurdities aside, the martial prowess of these people had never been in doubt. The men of northwest India had strong martial traditions going back centuries; for which their cultures, religions, geography and history had more to do than genetics. Warfare was a way of life in the barren and harsh plains and mountains of the Indus Valley, and the profession of arms was an honourable and hereditary occupation. "Hard countries breed hard men", and so it was in Punjab. In 1879, the Eden Commission in its report on the Indian Army to the

British Parliament noted that, "the Punjab is the home of the most martial races of India and its nursery of our best soldiers".[5] With the Great Game in full swing, the British were focused towards northwest and the emphasis of recruitment also shifted northwards so that by 1914, about three-quarters of Indian infantry came from the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province and Nepal.

By the time Lord Kitchener took over as Commander-in-Chief in 1902, Punjabisation of the Indian Army was well on its way. Amalgamation of the three presidency armies in 1895 made the process easier.[6] As the Madras Army was breathing its last, several of its units were rescued from extinction by infusion of new blood from Punjab. Between 1890 and 1893, seven Madras Infantry battalions were reconstituted with northerners, mostly Punjabi Muslims & Sikhs, and localized to Burma. Among these were the five battalions of the future 8th Punjab Regiment, who would go on to cover themselves in glory in the two world wars as Punjabi battalions.

Reconstitution 1890-93

During the Third Burma War, the nature of operations against insurgents and bandits waging guerrilla war had necessitated the raising and maintenance of a special force. These units were called Military Police and were made up of volunteers from the regular Army, as well as men recruited from northern India; mainly Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Pathans. By 1888, the total strength of these men in Upper Burma had risen to 8400. Due to a generous special allowance, service in these units was very popular and they had the pick of Punjabi recruits. Their organization was similar to infantry battalions but with a smaller complement of British officers. The Military Police were under the operational control of the District Magistrate although their duties were entirely military, and many of them were later transferred to

the Indian Army. These units operated in small detachments based at strategically sited strongpoints from where they sent out mounted patrols in search of insurgents.[7] They were largely responsible for the pacification of Upper Burma and later provided the bulk of manpower for the reconstituted Madras Infantry regiments.

In 1889, 33rd Madras Infantry (5/8th Punjab) embarked for Moulmein in Burma, when *en route* at Port Blair, it received orders for disbandment. It returned to Madras, where on 30 April 1890, it was mustered out. Next day, the battalion was re-raised at Toungoo in the Southern Shan States of Burma, as 3rd Regiment Burma Infantry; re-designated as 33rd Regiment (3rd Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry in 1891. The nucleus of the regiment was provided by the Shan Levy and a Sikh battalion of the Burma Military Police. It had five companies of Sikhs, two of Punjabi Muslims and one of Pathans. Major EB Nixon of 37th Dogras was appointed as its first commandant. In 1891, there was a tragic incidence when on the parade ground, a Pathan NCO shot dead Major Nixon, Lieutenant EW Jamieson, the adjutant, and two sepoys over some grievance. He was overpowered and captured by Havildar Peter Durand, who received the Indian Order of Merit for his bravery. A second murder in 1900, of Subedar Major Dure Khan, in which four Pathan sepoys were implicated, led to the replacement of Pathans with Punjabi Muslims.[8]

32nd Madras Infantry (4/8th Punjab) was reconstituted with four companies each of Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs from the Myingyan Battalion of Burma Military Police at Toungoo in 1890, with Captain ES Hastings, DSO, as its first commandant.[9] Initially designated as 4th Regiment Burma Infantry, it was re-designated as 32nd Regiment (4th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry in 1891. On 31 January 1892, 30th Madras Infantry (2/8th Punjab) was mustered out at Belgaum and the next day, it was re-raised at Mandalay, Burma, by Captain Walter Cook, as 30th Regiment (5th Burma

Battalion) Madras Infantry. The battalion received four companies of Sikhs, two of Punjabi Muslims, and one each of Brahmins and Rajputs from the Burma Military Police.[10]

In 1891, 31st Madras Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab) was disbanded at Moulmein, Burma, and its place was taken by the Shwebo Military Police Battalion under the command of Captain Henry D' Urban Keary, DSO. It was composed of Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, Pathans, Dogras, Brahmins, Rajputs and Garhwalis. On 1 February 1892, it was brought into the line as a regular unit of the Indian Army and re-designated as 31st Regiment (6th Burma Battalion) Madras (Light) Infantry. Its new composition was three companies of Punjabi Muslims, two each of Sikhs and Dogras, and one company of Hindustani Muslims.[11]

On 15 October 1893, 29th Madras Infantry (1/8th Punjab) was mustered out at Bellary and the next day, it was reconstituted as 29th Regiment (7th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry at Meiktila, Burma, with men from the Magwe, Mandalay and Pyawbwe Battalions of Military Police. Captain GW Maxwell was appointed the commandant. The battalion was composed of Punjabi & Hindustani Muslims and Sikhs. In 1895, Hindustanis were replaced with one company each of Brahmins and Rajputs.[12]

The numbering of Burma Battalions was not based on seniority but on the dates of their reconstitution. This caused some confusion until 1901, when the units were renumbered and renamed. In 1895, they adopted uniforms of drab (khaki) colour similar to their counterparts on the Northwest Frontier. With replacement of most of the officers and men, the battalions lost all connection with their Madrassi predecessors other than the nomenclature. Even this was seldom used as the units preferred to be known as Burma Battalions. In most cases, the only items taken over at the time of reconstitution were the Regimental Colours, and none of the units possess any detailed regimental records prior to the reconstitution, which sadly are lost to history. Their officers

wanted a new identity and were not too keen to maintain links with the old Madras Infantry. The 3rd Burma Battalion (5/8th Punjab) went so far as to even repudiate the Battle Honour of 'Cochin'; carried with so much pride by its predecessor.[13]

Frontier Operations, 1890-1896

In the decade following their reconstitution, the Burma Battalions remained employed in operations against the recalcitrant hill tribes in the border districts of Burma. The battalions were deployed in small detachments on remote border posts in a country without railways or proper roads. This often entailed long and arduous marches through hilly jungle terrain, which could last for weeks. Isolation was compounded by tropical diseases and the absence of proper medical care, which made life harsh and dangerous. However, the troops held out well and their performance during these difficult operations was highly commendable.

The Chins: Chin Hills are located in western Burma on the border with Manipur and the Arakan and are covered with dense trackless jungle intersected by deep ravines. The Chin tribesmen had been giving the Burmese a hard time by regularly raiding the settled areas during the winter season. When the British moved into the area in 1889, they too were met with hostility, with the Chins employing guerrilla tactics of ambush, hit and run raids, and attacks on lines of communication. Several punitive expeditions were despatched to suppress the rebellion, which was finally crushed in 1896. Three 8th Punjabi battalions were employed in these operations.

In January 1891, a British post at Yawdwin in the southern Chin District of Yaw was attacked by the Chins, who captured several military personnel. A punitive expedition was launched under Captain ES Hastings of 4th Burma Battalion (4/8th Punjab) to

punish the tribesmen and free the captives. The force, known as the Chinbok Column consisted of 96 rifles of 4th Burma Battalion and 112 mounted infantry. The column arrived at Yawdwin on 4 February 1891. The villages implicated in the attack were severely punished and the entire Yaw District was pacified.[14]

6th Burma Battalion (3/8th Punjab) proceeded to the Chin Hills in February 1892 and was based at Haka and Falam. It remained continuously employed in operations until the final suppression of the rebellion in 1896. It took part in expeditions to Pimpi, Tashon, South Chin Hills, Kairuma and Thetta. During these operations, the battalion greatly distinguished itself, with Captain Keary, the Commandant being awarded brevet-majority and Jemadar Bahadur Khan the IOM.[15] Bahadur Khan earned his award on 26 December 1892, when during the expedition to Pimpi, a small detachment under his command was ambushed by the Chins and several of his men were killed. The Jemadar "led forward his small party (18 men) with great dash and gallantry, and drove back the enemy under a very heavy fire, and eventually brought off his party without further loss".[16] In January 1897, the battalion finally marched to Meiktila, its first peace station since its reconstitution in 1892.

5th Burma Battalion (2/8th Punjab) was also engaged in operations against the Chins. A detachment of the battalion under Captain HN Taylor successfully operated around Mautok between December 1892 and March 1893, while another under Lieutenant NAK Burne was employed between November 1893 and May 1894. Captain Taylor received the DSO for his services during this operation.[17]

The Kachins: Kachin State is located in the north of Burma, forming part of the hills of Bhamo and Myitkyina Districts. Operations against the Kachin hill tribesmen had been going on since 1885, when the British first occupied Bhamo. However, the tribesmen were proving to be particularly stubborn in their

resistance. To suppress the rebellion, the British decided to launch several columns on both sides of the Irrawaddy during the winter of 1891-92. 3rd Burma Battalion (5/8th Punjab) formed part of the force operating from Bhamo and took part in relief of the besieged post of Sedon near the Chinese border on 14 February 1892. Subedar Prem Singh was awarded the Order of British India (OBI), while three sepoys of the battalion received the IOM for conspicuous bravery. The battalion was again employed against the Kachins in 1893, with columns from Bhamo and remained engaged in quelling various outbreaks. In 1894, it moved to Mandalay.[18]

The Shans: Shan States occupy the eastern part of Upper Burma and mostly consist of hilly country and rolling uplands. The terrain was especially difficult due to the absence of proper roads. The Shan tribal chiefs had a tense relationship with the Burmese king, which turned into open rebellion during the Third Anglo-Burmese War. The British moved into Shan country in 1886, and by 1897, the entire region had been pacified.

In 1890, the Shan State of Keng Tung on the border with French Indochina submitted to British rule. Taking advantage of the unsettled situation, the French crossed the Mekong River into the territory of Keng Tung. Mounted infantry of 4th Burma Battalion, then based at Fort Stedman, immediately moved out to counter the intruders. The French were driven out and their flag was captured by the battalion. As a reward for their prompt and decisive action, the battalion was allowed to carry the captured French Tricolour as their regimental flag. Since then, the battalion has the unique distinction of carrying the flag of a foreign country as its *Pullah*. In 1894, the battalion was employed in the First and Second Bré Expeditions in the country of the Bré and Padaung tribes between the Karen Hill Tracts of the Toungoo District and the Western Karenni States.[19]

The Boxer Rebellion 1900

19th century China was a country on its knees. Western powers had forced coercive and exploitative trade treaties on the Chinese, breeding deep resentment against them. As a politically and militarily weak China found herself helpless in the face of increasing foreign encroachment, several secret societies sprang up to oppose the foreign domination of their country. One of the most aggressive amongst these was the 'Righteous Harmonious Fists', commonly referred to as 'Boxers' by the Europeans. The Boxer Rebellion started in Shan-tung and soon spread to the northern province of Chih-li. Encouraged by the Imperial Chinese Court, the wrath of the Boxers was at first directed towards Western Christian missionaries and their Chinese converts but soon turned against all foreigners.

By 1900, the unrest appeared to be out of control, with widespread rioting, killing and looting. In June, foreign legations in Beijing were besieged. With the Chinese Government unable or unwilling to suppress the Boxers, Western powers decided to send an expeditionary force to China. The 20,000 strong force from eight nations assembled at Tientsin in July and defeated the Chinese in two separate engagements. On 14 August, the force arrived outside Beijing and after heavy fighting, relieved the besieged legations on 16 August. The Dowager Empress fled her palace and the Allies triumphantly paraded through the Forbidden City. With the Boxers largely dispersed, the Allies imposed another humiliating treaty on the Chinese. During the next several months, numerous columns and patrols were sent out to hunt down the insurgents and overawe the population.

As the situation in China worsened, the British Government ordered the despatch of a large expeditionary force from India in June 1900. The force, under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Alfred Gaselee, numbered more than 10,000 troops divided

into four infantry brigades and a cavalry brigade, besides divisional troops.[20] In August 1900, 6th Burma Battalion (3/8th Punjab), then based at Mandalay, received orders to join the China Expeditionary Force. The battalion, commanded by Major Keary, arrived at Rangoon on 30 August and was issued with the new .303 rifles. It embarked for Hong Kong the same day on *SS Warora* and *SS Nuddea*. However, on 9 September, the ships ran into a typhoon near Hong Kong, and *SS Nuddea* was almost wrecked. Most of the horses and mules of the battalion were killed, while a large portion of arms and equipment was damaged. The battalion joined 4th Infantry Brigade at Hong Kong. However, by the time it landed at Taku in north-eastern China on 15 October, most of the fighting was over.

The next year and a half saw the battalion continuously employed on guard and column duties. The most notable among these was the Yangt-sun Column, which was despatched on 27 December to intercept a body of Boxers near Paotingfu, northwest of Tientsin. The insurgents dispersed on approach of the troops, and on 2 January 1901, the column was ordered to return to Tientsin. The battalion had to make a forced march from Tung-An to Lofa through a blizzard and despite the intense cold, no man fell out due to sickness or fatigue. After serving at Beijing, Tongshan and Lutai, the battalion left for Rangoon in July 1902, where it remained stationed till 1906. For its services in North China, it was awarded the Campaign Honour of 'China 1900'.[21] 3rd Burma Battalion (5/8th Punjab) was also ordered to move to Tongshan in North China but disembarked at Hong Kong, where it stayed for the next three years.[22]

In 1901, the cumbersome titles of Burma Battalions were simplified by removing all mention of Madras Army. The new titles were:

29th Regiment (7th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry became 29th Burma Infantry (1/8th Punjab)

30th Regiment (5th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry became 30th Burma Infantry (2/8th Punjab)

31st Regiment (6th Burma Battalion) Madras (Light) Infantry became 31st Burma Light Infantry (3/8th Punjab)

32nd Regiment (4th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry became 32nd Burma Infantry (4/8th Punjab)

33rd Regiment (3rd Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry became 33rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab) [23]

Kitchener's Reforms 1903

It had been recognized since the 1880s that the Indian Army had become anachronistic and that major organizational reforms were needed to bring it in line with the prevailing geo-political environment. The reforms were started during the tenure of Lord Roberts, who had been keen to give the Army a clear focus, which was the Russian threat from the northwest. In 1886, an effort was made to establish an Indian Reserve and in 1895, the three presidency armies were abolished. The Army was divided into four commands of Bengal, Madras (including Burma), Bombay and Punjab. Each command was placed under a lieutenant general, the whole under the unified command of a single Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army.[24]

However, the process of reforms was slow, and more drastic changes were needed to turn the Indian Army into a modern fighting force. Lord Kitchener's appointment as C-in-C in 1902, gave the reforms the much-needed impetus. He brought about radical changes in both the organization as well as the outlook of the Army based upon four main principles: the main function of the Army was to defend the North West Frontier; the Army in peace was to be organized, trained and distributed in units of command similar to those in which it would take the field in war; the troops earmarked for internal security were meant to free the

Field Army for war; and that all fighting units were to be given the opportunity to train for war, so that they should be capable of carrying out all the functions of an army in the field.

Kitchener's reforms were geared towards bringing about complete unification of the Army and uniformity in its standards. Towards this end, unified cavalry and infantry lines were created, with all units being renumbered. The Indian Staff Corps was abolished and henceforth all officers were to be gazetted directly to the regiments. All Indian units were grouped into tactical formations of ten divisions of two to three brigades, with an additional four independent brigades. The divisions were numbered, with the name of the city where they were based forming part of the nomenclature, e.g., 2nd (Rawalpindi) Division. The 10th Division was designated as Burma Division. In 1908, Indian formations were divided into two armies: the Northern Army and the Southern Army. All units were rotated throughout India, and keeping in mind the orientation towards the northwest, service on the Northwest Frontier was made compulsory for all infantry battalions. A serious effort was made to equip the Indian Army with modern weapons, although the process was far from complete at the start of the First World War. The reforms led to definite improvement in the outlook of the Army with special emphasis on rigorous and standardized training, promotion of sports and regimental clubs, and inter-unit and inter-formation competitions to test the units' efficiency.[25]

Renumbering of the units in 1903 broke all links with the old presidency armies. All infantry battalions of the Indian Army were numbered consecutively, starting with the old Bengal units and the Punjab Frontier Force. These were followed by Madras units, the Hyderabad Contingent and finally, Bombay units. For Madras battalions, the formula was to add 60 to their old regimental numbers.[26] To better reflect their new ethnic composition, Burma Battalions were given the option of becoming

Punjabi regiments.[27] All of them except 33rd Burma Infantry elected to become Punjabis.[28] The new designations were: [29]

29th Burma Infantry became 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab)
30th Burma Infantry became 90th Punjabis (2/8th Punjab)
31st Burma Light Infantry became 91st Punjabis[30] (3/8th Punjab)
32nd Burma Infantry became 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab)
33rd Burma Infantry became 93rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab)

Since the formation of linked battalions in 1886, the distribution of battalions in the groups had undergone changes. These changes had brought the 8th Punjabis together, further cementing the ties between them. The new groupings with their regimental centres were:[31]

Meiktila – 89th Punjabis, 90th Punjabis & 91st Punjabis
Mandalay – 92nd Punjabis, 93rd Burma Infantry & 72nd Punjabis

The battalions stayed in Burma, but with the pacification of the country and raising of new police units, the presence of these units in Burma had become superfluous. In 1910, orders were given to de-localize the battalions and during the next six years, they moved to India; just in time to take part in the bloody battles of the Great War.

With the new emphasis on training and sports, 8th Punjabis excelled in these competitions. The 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab) arrived at Mandalay from Bhamo in 1902, where they greatly distinguished themselves in the Burma Battalions Polo Tournaments. For the next decade, the battalion remained engaged in police duties at various stations including Mandalay, Rangoon, Myitkyina and Meiktila. In 1905, the 89th Punjabis received new Regimental and King's Colours at Rangoon. In March 1914, they moved out of Burma to Dinapore in India.[32] The battalion was composed of three companies of Sikhs, three of Punjabi Muslims, one of Brahmins and one of Rajputs.

In 1904, sanction was given for appointment of General Officers with previous association with battalions as Honorary

Colonels, and on 13 May 1904, Lieutenant General William Osborn was appointed Colonel of 90th Punjabis (2/8th Punjab). He had joined 30th Madras Native Infantry as an ensign on 10 June 1848. The 90th Punjabis moved to India in November 1911 and were based at Nasirabad in Rajputana. On 11 December, the battalion took part in the Imperial Durbar at Delhi and was presented with new Colours by King George V. The composition of the battalion was four companies of Sikhs, two of Punjabi Muslims and one each of Brahmins and Rajputs.[33]

The 91st Punjabis (3/8th Punjab) were stationed at Rangoon in 1903, when they won the Barnett Brothers Revolver Challenge Cup. In 1904, the battalion won every team and individual event at the Burma Divisional Assault-at-Arms, as well as most of the events at the Divisional Rifle Meeting. In 1906, the battalion received new Colours, and the next year, it won the All-India Sports Shield at Calcutta, after having been runners up in the previous two years. Its amazing performance in sports continued, as it repeated the feat of 1907 for the next three years. In 1910, it also won the Burma Battalions Polo Tournament. The battalion owed its competitive edge largely to the leadership of its Commandant Lieutenant Colonel Keary, who commanded the battalion for seventeen years. In 1912, Major General Keary was appointed Colonel of 91st Punjabis.[34] The battalion was the last of the 8th Punjabis to leave Burma; proceeding to Mesopotamia in August 1916. Its composition at the time was three companies of Punjabi Muslims, two of Sikhs, two of Dogras and one of Hindustani Muslims.

On 10 June 1910, Major General ES Hastings, CB, DSO, who had commanded the battalion from 1891 to 1907, was appointed Colonel of 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab). In 1913, the battalion moved to Benares in India. Its composition at the time was four companies of Sikhs and four of Punjabi Muslims.[35] The 93rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab) was presented with new Colours

by the Duke of Connaught at Mandalay in 1907. Three years later, the composition of the battalion was changed to four companies of Sikhs and four of Punjabi Muslims. In 1913, 93rd Burma Infantry left Burma for Barrackpore in India.[36]

The fifty years since the Great Rebellion had been a period of great change in India and its Army. The British rule in India had been consolidated and was secure from all threats, while the Indian Army was the envy of the world. "If India was the jewel in the British Crown, then Indian Army was the cement holding it in place". Over the years, a new military culture took its roots, epitomized by chivalry, *esprit de corps*, and devotion to duty. It gave the Army way of life the romance and mystique, which still endure to this day. The many facets of this new culture have been commented upon in much detail in the first volume of this History.[37]

Kitchener's reforms had been geared towards transformation of the Indian Army into a modern fighting force. However, as the storm clouds of war gathered over Europe, the Indian Army was far from ready to take on the modern armies of the world. But it is a credit to its officers and men that despite early setbacks, it rapidly transformed itself from a small frontier-oriented army into a large force of more than a million men; fighting on a global scale for four long years in almost all theatres of war with great courage and distinction. The battalions of 8th Punjab Regiment were in the forefront of fighting throughout the Great War. They would end the war with their reputation as formidable warriors firmly established, and all doubts about their Madrassi past removed forever—a true Punjabi Renaissance.

5
The Great War

If wars are senseless, then the war that engulfed the world in 1914 has to be the most senseless of them all. By the time it ended, nobody was sure what it was all about, yet everybody had been keen to jump in. Their feeble excuses and pious protestations aside, the Great European Powers had embarked on a war of aggrandizement thinking it would be another promenade, a short campaign, parades, glory. But military technology over the previous decades had evolved so rapidly that the generals still did not fully understand the awesome power at their disposal. They fought a 19th century war with 20th century weapons. The result was carnage on such a scale that it still defies comprehension. The price of all this was paid by the young officers and men who served as cannon fodder to the vanity of their political and military masters, and by the hapless civilians.

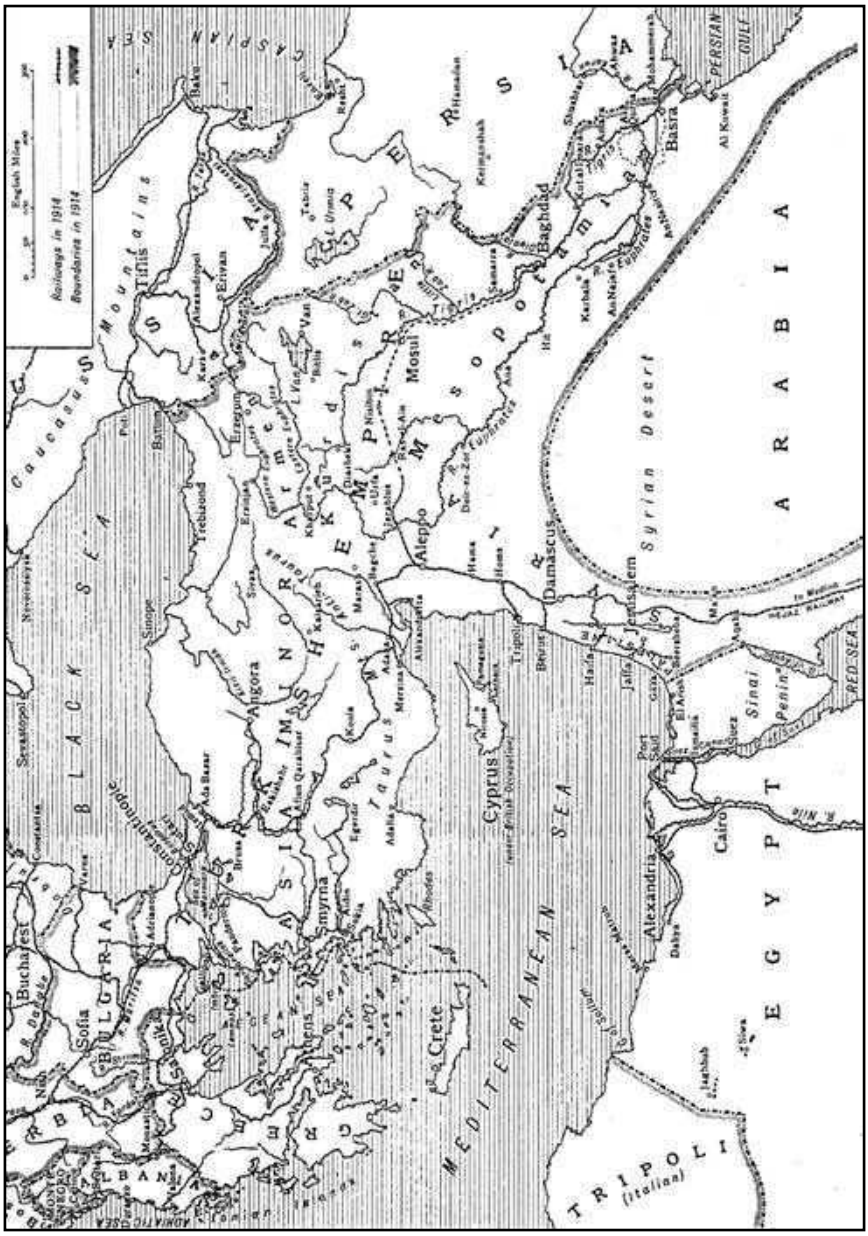
In many ways the First World War was a watershed in the history of warfare: the unprecedented scale of the war; the staggering number of troops involved; the horrific destructive power of the new armaments; the obscenity of chemical weapons; the sheer incompetence and callousness of the generals on all sides; and, the unbelievable courage and fortitude of their soldiers. It was a World War in its true sense, and by the time it was over, empires had crumbled, entire cities lay in ruins and tens of millions were dead; a whole generation almost wiped out.

The chain of events that began at Sarajevo in June 1914, soon engulfed the entire continent of Europe, her colonies, and then much of the world. The Germans opened their offensive in the west by sweeping into France through Belgium in an attempt to envelop the French left flank, but in the process, exposed their own right flank. The French recovered in time and halted the Germans

on the River Marne in September 1914. However, before the frontlines could be stabilized, the Allied situation for some time remained precarious. The small British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front found itself inadequate and required urgent reinforcements. The only available trained regular troops at the time were in the Indian Army. In September 1914, an Indian Corps was rushed to France and Belgium to stem the German tide.

In the meantime, the Indian Army was mobilized for the expected war with Turkey, which was sympathetic to Germany. As the offensive in the west ground to a halt and the fighting degenerated into interminable trench warfare, the focus shifted eastwards. With Turkey joining in on the side of the Germans and Austrians, Britain tried to knock her out with a bold stroke in the Dardanelles in 1915. This having failed, a long campaign ensued in the Middle East, which dealt a deathblow to the Ottoman Empire, but took the British Empire to its zenith. Here, battles were fought over huge tracts of territory and entire countries were conquered. And it was all done by the Indian Army, which had grown from a hundred and fifty thousand men in 1914 to more than a million in 1918—all volunteers.

The Indian Army recovered from its weaknesses at the start of the war with astonishing speed, assimilating the new technologies and adapting to new methods of warfare. The small army, which had been trained and equipped for frontier operations and internal security, soon found itself fighting the modern armies of Germany and Turkey thousands of miles from home. The professionalism and courage that it displayed over the four long years has become the stuff of legends. All 8th Punjabi battalions fought in the war, from France and Gallipoli to Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine. But it was the Mesopotamian Campaign, which they made their own; fighting in almost every battle of the campaign, they never wavered despite terrible losses and came out of the war covered in glory.



5. The Near East 1914.

Egypt 1914-15

In September and October 1914, three 8th Punjabi battalions received their mobilization orders: 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab) at Dinapore, 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab) at Benares and 93rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab) at Barrackpore. All officers and men were excited at the prospect of service overseas. No one at the time could have imagined that they would be gone for more than five years and that many of them would never return. The battalions were brought up to the establishment and reservists were recalled. However, due to the absence of a proper reserve system in the Indian Army, many of the reservists were found unfit for field service. New weapons were issued and efforts were made to provide suitable clothing to the men, often from the battalions' own resources. Each battalion left two officers and some men at their regimental depot to look after regimental affairs and despatch reinforcements.

The defence of Suez Canal was vital for the British and the main focus of the Indian Expeditionary Force was Egypt, which was then garrisoned by only one newly arrived and partially trained British division. The expeditionary force was divided into several forces named A to F. As the situation in France became precarious, it was decided to send Forces A and F to the Western Front, but Force F was detached in Egypt. Forces B and C went to East Africa, Force D to Mesopotamia and Force E to Egypt. Later on, Forces F and E were designated as the 10th and 11th Indian Divisions and together became the Indian Expeditionary Force (E).[1]

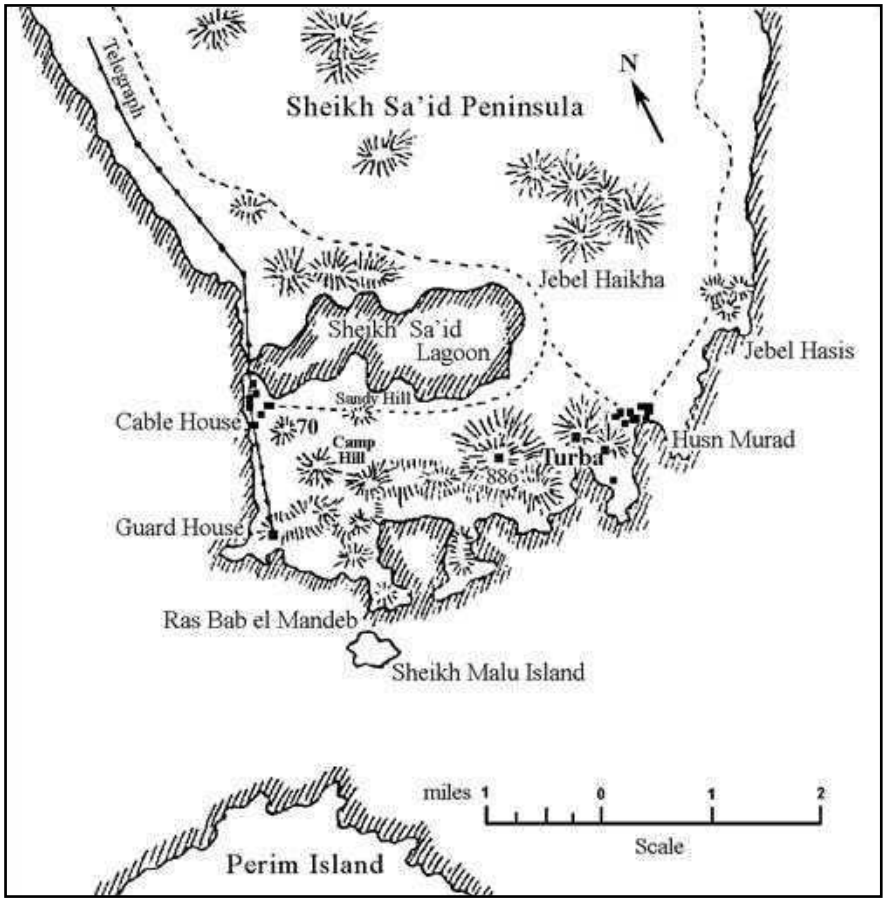
A huge flotilla of naval ships was assembled at Bombay and Karachi in October 1914 and sailed for the Suez Canal in early November. The 89th Punjabis under the command of Lieutenant

Colonel LWY Campbell embarked at Karachi as part of the 29th Indian Infantry Brigade of Force F, while 93rd Burma Infantry under Lieutenant Colonel SR Stevens sailed with Force E. The 92nd Punjabis under Major TR Maclachlan embarked at Bombay with 22nd Indian Infantry Brigade. The ships from Karachi joined the convoy sailing from Bombay on 5 November; the entire flotilla being made up of 48 ships, with an escort of three destroyers.[2]

Capture of Fort Turba:[3] The Turkish fort of Turba was situated on the Sheikh Sayed Peninsula on the Red Sea Coast of Arabia overlooking the Island of Perim. The guns of the fort posed a threat to British ships passing through the narrow straits on their way to the Suez Canal and it was decided to neutralize them. The 29th Indian Brigade with 89th Punjabis was detached from the convoy with the objective of capture and destruction of the fort and its heavy guns.

On 10 November 1914, following heavy naval bombardment of Turkish positions, the 89th Punjabis and two double-companies of 69th Punjabis landed on the west coast of Sheikh Sayed Peninsula. The covering party under Captain RS Engledue landed at 1050 hours and seized Hill 70. The Turks from their position on Camp Hill tried to disrupt the landings with long range rifle and shrapnel fire but were ineffective. The battalion concentrated at Hill 70 and then advanced towards Camp Hill. The ground over the first 1000 yards was sandy but became rocky as the advance continued. Due to heavy enemy fire, the system of alternate rushes under covering fire was adopted. The Turks abandoned their positions and retreated along the east coast, allowing Captain Wood with his double-company to capture Fort Turba without any opposition. The pioneers then demolished the fort and its guns.

During the operation, one sepoy was killed, while eight men were wounded including Second Lieutenant MHA Campbell. Sepoys Bur Singh, Buta Singh and Dasaunda Singh were later



6. Sheikh Sayed Peninsula 1914.

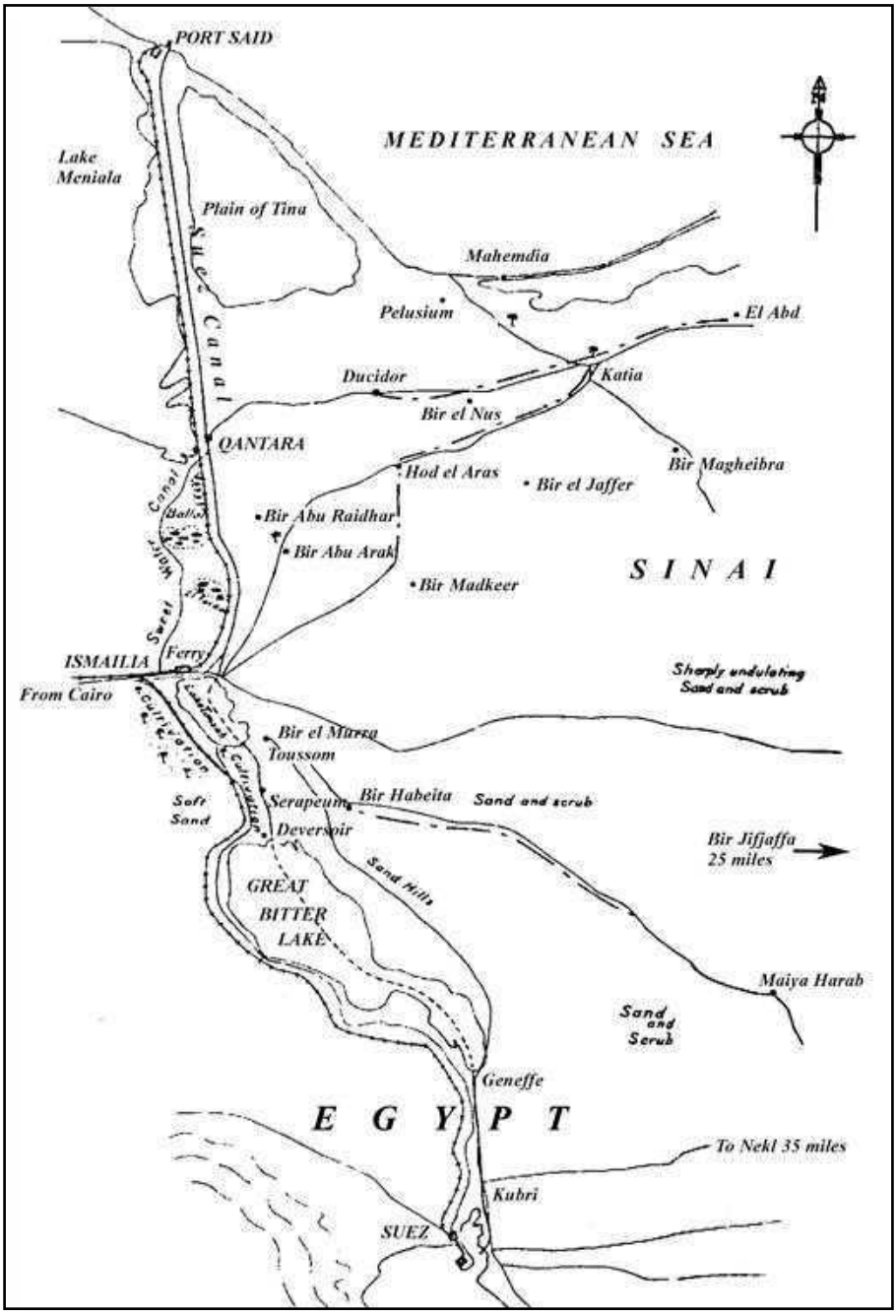
awarded the Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM) for providing first aid and evacuating Lieutenant Campbell under enemy fire. The battalion re-embarked the next morning and rejoined the convoy, arriving at Suez on 14 November.

Turkish Attack on Suez Canal: Entry of Turkey in the war made the British situation in Egypt critical. The Germans were keen for the Turks to attack the Suez Canal, as it would not only disrupt British supplies and communications with the rest of their empire, but also tie up large numbers of British forces desperately needed

in France. In November 1914, a large Turkish force of six divisions under Djemal Pasha crossed into the Sinai. The Turks set out in three columns: along the coast from El Arish through El Abd and Qatiya in the north; towards Suez through Nekhl in the south; and in the centre, from Beersheba through Kossaima, El Hassana and Bir Jifjaffa towards the central part of the canal between Lake Timsah and the Great Bitter Lake. This was the main objective of the Turkish attack, where they planned to cross the canal in rafts and pontoons under cover of heavy machine gun and rifle fire from the east bank. The other columns were to launch diversionary attacks on Qantara, Ismailia, Ferdan, Shaluf and Suez. The attacking force totalled around 12,000 men with six batteries of 6-inch guns.[4]

Facing the Turks were 70,000 Indian, British, Egyptian, Australian and New Zealander troops. British defences consisted of strongpoints on both sides of the canal, besides naval ships patrolling the shipway. They also had the advantage of an excellent road and railway line running parallel to the canal, which could be used for rapid movement of troops and supplies. The main responsibility for the defence of the canal had fallen on the 10th Indian Division (28th, 29th & 30th Brigades) and 11th Indian Division (22nd, 31st & 32nd Brigades), which however, were seriously handicapped by a shortage of artillery and absence of cavalry, mechanical transport, signals and engineers.[5]

On their arrival at Suez, the 93rd Burma Infantry moved to Qantara on the east bank of the canal, where it stayed till 9 January 1915, when on joining the 31st Brigade of 11th Division, it moved to Moascar near Ismailia. During its stay in Egypt, the battalion served at Port Said and again at Qantara, but was not engaged in any fighting.[6] The 89th Punjabis initially took up defences at Port Said but were later moved to Qantara in January, where they relieved 93rd Burma Infantry.[7] The 92nd Punjabis entrained at Suez for Ismailia, where they stayed till 8 January, when they moved to



7. The Suez Canal 1915.

Serapeum, about two miles north of the Great Bitter Lake. On 23 January, two double-companies were deployed at Toussom, a mile south of Lake Timsah, while the other two remained at Serapeum. Both deployments were on the east bank of the canal.[8]

From the middle of January, British patrols started reporting contact with the advancing Turks in several sectors. On 1 February, contact was established all along the front. The next day, there was a sandstorm and the night was very dark. Taking advantage of the poor visibility, the Turks launched their attack in the early hours of 3 February on three fronts: Qantara from the northeast, Ismailia Ferry Post from the southeast and Toussom and Serapeum in the centre.

The 89th Punjabis, who were manning the defences of Qantara, had thrown up several piquets beyond the main perimeter. On the night of 2 February, two double-companies were manning the piquets under Majors Geoghegan and Prentis. At 0400 hours on 3 February, patrols of Piquet No. 5 reported the advance of large bodies of Turks. Half an hour later, Turkish advance parties blundered into the barbed wire defences of Piquet No. 5. Heavy fighting broke out as the Turks tried to extricate themselves and came in contact with Piquets 4 and 6. Reinforcements were rushed in and the Turkish attack was beaten back.

As the day broke, the Turks suffered further casualties due to fire from a naval ship in the canal. Thirty-six prisoners were captured and another twenty were found dead in the barbed wire entanglements. The Turks again launched an attack at around 0700 hours, this time on the post of Tel-el-Ahmar, just south of Piquet No. 1, and a double-company was despatched to assist the post. It was here, that Sepoy Dasaunda Singh again distinguished himself. He made nine trips to the camp, 800 yards in the rear, bringing ammunition to the piquets, and each time carrying back a killed or wounded comrade, all the while exposed to heavy enemy fire. The Turks broke off their attack and during the night, withdrew

completely from the area. During the action, the battalion's casualties were four Other Ranks (ORs) killed and 23 wounded, including Captain Engledue.[9] For his gallant conduct, Sepoy Dasaunda Singh received the Indian Order of Merit.[10]

The main Turkish attack on the canal was launched at a point about 2000 yards south of the post of Toussom. Early on the morning of 3 February at 0325 hours, the sentries of 92nd Punjabis at Toussom heard movement of troops southeast of the post. Major Maclachlan, the Commandant, immediately directed machine gun fire on the east bank of the canal. Then, as the moon came out of the clouds, parties of Turkish soldiers were seen moving towards the canal carrying pontoons and rafts. They were fired upon and checked by the 92nd Punjabis supported by 62nd Punjabis and an Egyptian battery of artillery on the opposite bank. Soon however, parties of Turks carrying pontoons were seen on the east bank of the canal on a frontage of a mile and a half. Rapid and effective fire by the defenders resulted in the Turks abandoning most of their craft. Several vessels were sunk, while the few who managed to cross were immediately charged by the 62nd Punjabis, who killed or captured all the occupants. In the meantime, heavy fire continued from the Turks, who had taken shelter behind sand dunes near the bank.

As daylight approached, the Turks launched an attack against the Toussom Post, while their artillery opened up on British positions on the west bank and on the ships in the canal. A Turkish trench was seen about 200 yards south of the post and enfilade fire by the 92nd Punjabis killed its occupants. Another group of about 350 Turks occupying the day trenches of 92nd Punjabis southeast of the post was attacked at 0700 hours by a party under Captain HM Riggs, who captured portions of the trenches along with some prisoners. A counterattack at 1015 hours in which 70 Turks surrendered, was followed by another attack by Lieutenant JW Thomson-Glover and men of H Company at

1100 hours, to recapture the remaining portion of the trenches. The task was completed by 1530 hours after heavy fighting. A total of eight Turkish officers and 280 men were killed or captured in the entire operation. The 92nd Punjabis suffered losses of two men killed and seven wounded.[11] Naik Mihan Singh was awarded the IOM for conspicuous bravery during the day's action, when he moved up to a Turkish trench alone and opened fire on the enemy, forcing him to take shelter in the trench. On being joined by the other men of his squad, he kept the enemy pinned down, enabling his company to get to a point where they could enfilade the trench, after which the Turks surrendered.[12]

In the meantime, at Serapeum, the two double-companies of 92nd Punjabis along with two platoons of 2nd Rajputs had started moving northwards in support of Toussom, when at 0840 hours, they came across a large number of Turks concealed among the sand hills. At the same time, another Turkish force supported by two batteries was seen advancing towards Serapeum from the northeast. The 92nd Punjabis, supported by six platoons of 2/10th Gurkhas, who had moved up from Deversoir, turned to face the Turkish attack, which was brought to a standstill by their determined defence. They were soon aided by British naval ships firing on Turkish positions from the canal. By late afternoon, all Turkish activity had ceased along the front, and it became clear that the Turkish attempt on Suez Canal had failed. During the night, bulk of the Turkish force withdrew from the frontlines.

On 4 February, Captain LFA Cochran advanced with two double-companies of 92nd Punjabis from Serapeum towards Toussom to clear the area of snipers. One double-company moved along the bank, while the other extended to the right to cut off the enemy's retreat. At 0840 hours, the 92nd Punjabis made contact with an entrenched body of Turks numbering about 350. After an exchange of fire lasting for five minutes, some Turks came out of their trenches with the butts of their rifles turned upwards.

Thinking that the enemy intended to surrender, Captain Cochran advanced towards them but came under fire that killed or wounded several sepoys. The party then fell back, taking shelter about 100 yards south of the enemy's entrenchment and again engaged the Turks. Soon after, a sniper killed Captain Cochran as he stood up to observe the enemy. A force under Major TR Maclachlan moved from Serapeum for their assistance and after an intense firefight, the Turks surrendered. Among the prisoners were seven officers and 292 men, while 59 lay dead in the trenches. The casualties of 92nd Punjabis were one officer and three men killed, while 15 were wounded.[13] Havildar Muhammad Azim was awarded the IOM for leading his squad gallantly throughout the day's action despite getting wounded earlier in the day.[14]

By 5 February, the Turks were reported to be in full retreat across the Sinai. Lack of cavalry and mechanical transport prevented a pursuit by the British. Although the Turkish attack on Suez Canal failed, it was nonetheless an audacious and skilful enterprise. To bring such a large force of men and material across 140 miles of desert against a superior and well-entrenched enemy, and then to withdraw successfully with artillery and baggage intact, and relatively few casualties, was no mean achievement. By demonstrating these abilities, the Turks ensured that a large number of British troops were tied down in Egypt to counter any future threat to the canal.

Gallipoli 1915

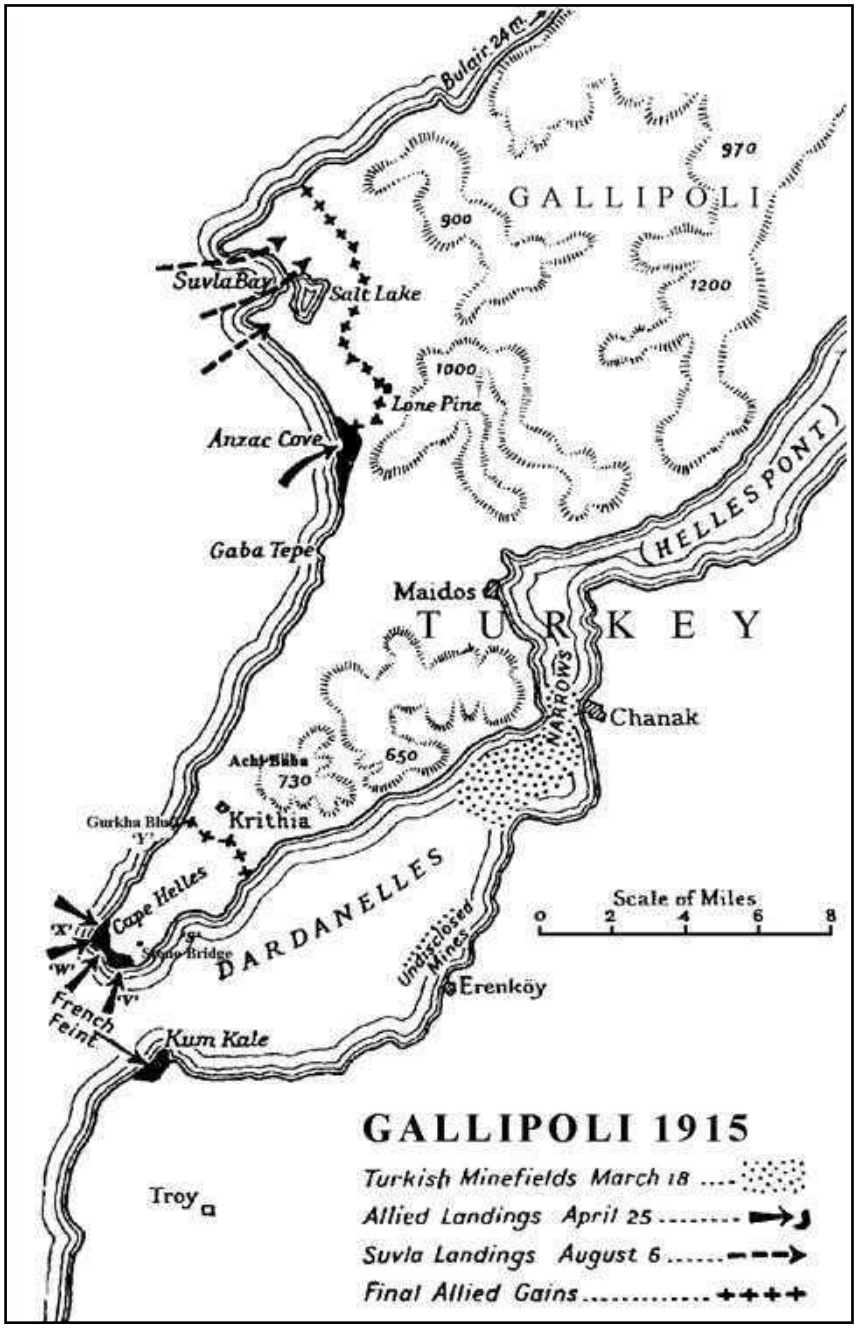
The Straits of Dardanelles is a narrow forty-mile-long channel joining the Sea of Marmara with the Aegean Sea. It is bounded on one side by the Turkish mainland and on the other by the Gallipoli Peninsula, a rocky and hilly strip of land jutting out from the European part of Turkey. As German influence increased in Turkey before the war, the British considered the idea of forcing

the Dardanelles to open the Russian ports on the Black Sea and at the same time, threaten Constantinople, the Turkish capital. However, the proposal was shelved, after being deemed too hazardous. On 2 February 1915, with the Russians hard pressed by Turkish forces in the Caucasus, the Commander of the Russian Army requested the British for a "demonstration" against the Turks to ease pressure on his troops. The British decided on the Dardanelles even though the Russians withdrew their request following their victory in the Caucasus.

The task of opening the Dardanelles was given to the Royal Navy, which was to destroy the Turkish forts and batteries along the coast. The land forces were to follow and occupy the Gallipoli Peninsula. The objectives were to open the straits, destroy the Turkish fleet and arsenals, and threaten Constantinople. The naval bombardment began in February and continued intermittently well into the middle of next month, when on 22 March, the naval option was abandoned after six British ships were sunk or disabled. It was then decided to launch the invasion force, which consisted of the 29th British Division, a corps of two divisions from Australia and New Zealand (Anzac), the Royal Navy Division of Marines and the 1st French Colonial Division; 75,000 troops in all.

The 29th Division was to land simultaneously on five different beaches (named S, V, W, X & Y) of Cape Helles, the tip of the peninsula, and move inland to seize the heights of Achi Baba. The Anzacs were to land further up on the western coast of Gallipoli north of Gaba Tepe and straddle the peninsula. The French were to make a diversionary landing at Kum Kale on the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles, and the Marines were to make a feint against Bulair, the neck of the peninsula.

Secrecy and surprise were considered vital. However, the Turks by now were fully alert to the impending invasion and had moved six divisions into the theatre. But they still did not know where exactly the blow would fall, and their commander, the



8. Allied Invasion of Gallipoli 1915.

German General Liman von Sanders had to disperse his divisions. He deployed two divisions on the Asiatic side, two at Bulair and one at Gallipoli, with another one in reserve near the 'waist' of the peninsula. The Turks were completely surprised by the multiple landings. But the painfully slow and inept follow up by the British allowed the Turks to recover from their initial shock and reinforce their two divisions in Gallipoli with several more. The plan, which had been brilliant in conception, foundered and then failed due to poor execution.

The invasion began on 25 April, but things started going wrong from the very start. The 29th Division's landings on beaches W & V were robustly resisted by the Turks and the division suffered heavy casualties, while the vital Y beach was abandoned due to some confused orders. And then, the division commander failed to exploit his overwhelming superiority by pausing on the beaches to rest, allowing the Turks to withdraw to a more secure line in front of Krithia. The Anzacs on the other hand, ran into Lieutenant Colonel Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk), Commander of the Turkish Reserve Division on Gallipoli, who soon hurled them back to the beaches. Inertia and lack of initiative by British commanders squandered the initial surprise and numerical superiority at the points of decision. As both sides rushed in reinforcements, the campaign degenerated into another bloody slog in trenches with horrendous casualties reminiscent of the Western Front.

In April 1915, the 29th Indian Brigade in Egypt was ordered to Gallipoli. The brigade, commanded by Major General HV Cox, consisted of the 69th and 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab), 14th Sikhs and 1/6th Gurkhas. The 89th Punjabis left Qantara on 15 April and embarked from Port Said on 26 April. They arrived at Cape Helles three days later, where they witnessed heavy fighting, as the British launched their first unsuccessful attack against Krithia. The battalion disembarked at V beach on 30 April and went into bivouac on the cliffs between V and W beaches. During the next

few days, it came under heavy fire as the Turks launched their own ill-fated counterattack on 1 May. Next day, the 29th Brigade was placed in reserve of 29th Division and the battalion was employed in reconnaissance, improvement of trenches and roads, and unloading and moving of stores and guns. On 4 May, the brigade moved into bivouac near Stone Bridge in support of the French, who were holding the right half of the Allied front.[15] On 5 May, No. 3 and 4 Double-Companies of 89th Punjabis moved up in support of 88th British Brigade as the Allies prepared to launch a frontal attack on the Krithia position all along the three-mile front. The other two double-companies, which were made up of Punjabi Muslims, stayed behind and were not employed in fighting during the campaign because the brigade commander "was not prepared to guarantee the steadfastness of Mahommedan troops fighting against the Turks".[16]

On 6 May, the Allies launched their second attack against Krithia. The offensive continued for three days, achieving nothing but a mounting casualty toll. On 9 May, 29th Indian Brigade relieved 87th British Brigade, taking over the left of the British line from the sea to Gully Ravine. The 89th Punjabis took over the trenches astride the ravine under heavy fire. During the next three days, neither side made any effort to attack but exchange of fire continued, and the battalion suffered several casualties including Major Prentis and Subedar Major Sunder Singh, who were wounded. On 12 May, the Gurkhas launched an attack to capture a commanding feature towards the west, called Gurkha Bluff. Under the cover of artillery and covering fire from 89th Punjabis, the Gurkhas achieved their objective and linked up with the line held by 89th Punjabis. When the Turks tried to flee from their trenches, they suffered heavy casualties due to the fire of 89th Punjabis. Next day, No. 4 Double-Company under Captain Scruby advanced some 100 yards to improve its field of fire and dug itself in. However, in the process, it suffered heavy casualties, including the Company

Commander, who was severely wounded. Havildar Harnam Singh greatly distinguished himself throughout the day by his gallantry and cool headedness under fire.[17]

Concerns about the loyalty of Muslim soldiers led to the withdrawal of the two Punjabi battalions, and during the evening of 13 May, the 89th Punjabis were relieved by 14th Sikhs. On 15 May, the battalion embarked for Egypt, arriving at Alexandria three days later. During its short stay at Gallipoli, the battalion suffered casualties of two British officers, five Indian officers and more than a hundred ORs killed, wounded or missing.[18] The fruitless struggle on the Gallipoli Peninsula continued for several more months, but despite repeated attacks, the Anzacs never got off the beach and the Krithia line was not breached. The British finally withdrew in January 1916, having suffered more than 200,000 casualties—more than two-thirds of them due to dysentery and diarrhoea.

France 1915

In the autumn of 1914, the Allied situation on the Western Front was still precarious despite the German setback at the Marne. There were only five infantry divisions in the British Expeditionary Force holding a front of 38 miles, extending from the Belgian lines near Nieuport to the French lines south of Ypres. While new formations were being trained in England, fresh troops were urgently required to shore up the defences. The Indian Corps that sailed in September for France was made up of 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions. It was later followed by the Indian Cavalry Corps. The 24,000 strong Indian Corps landed at Marseilles in September and October 1914 and was immediately rushed to the front. Over the next fifteen months, it was constantly engaged in fighting, taking part in some of the bloodiest battles of the war: Ypres, Givenchy, Neuve Chapelle, Loos. Indian units

suffered horrendous casualties but continued to fight with the valour and tenacity that was their hallmark. This was all the more creditable considering how unprepared they were for what awaited them in France.

Until 1914, the Indian Army had never faced a major military power, and its troops had never experienced the kind of artillery fire they faced in France. They had no concept of trench warfare, had never seen an airplane, and lacked modern weapons and equipment. They were in a foreign land thousands of miles from home in a severely cold climate to which they were unaccustomed. They landed in tropical uniforms and went into battle without any preparation or training. So desperate was the British situation that even though British and other Dominion troops were committed to action after months of training, the Indians were despatched to the front immediately on their arrival. And they fully lived up to the faith placed in them. In October 1914, the Germans made another major effort against the weak British line. If the British front had collapsed, then the way to Calais and other Channel ports would have been open for the Germans. In what came to be known as the First Battle of Ypres, the Indian lines held firm, and a desperate situation was saved. At Neuve Chapelle in 1915, they were the first to breach the German lines and tenaciously held on to their gains, while during the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, they again stemmed the German advance. Unfortunately, the crucial role played by the Indian Corps in saving the Allied situation in France in 1914-15 has not received the credit it deserves.

During the bloody battles of 1914, and then in the spring offensive of 1915, when the Germans used poison gas at Ypres, the Indian Corps suffered terribly. By 31 August 1915, the corps had suffered 29,000 casualties. And herein lay the Achilles heel of the corps. The Indian Army lacked a proper system of reserve. Each battalion had a reserve of about ten percent and many of these

reservists on recall were found to be unfit for service. But the number of casualties was so huge that even these would have been totally inadequate. And then, there was the logistical nightmare of despatching reinforcements all the way from India to France. These were provided by 'milking' other regular battalions, which in turn weakened them.

Another major setback was the high casualty rate among British officers. Some of the battalions lost every British officer, who had sailed with them from India. The Indian Army was heavily dependent on these officers. They spoke the language of the sepoys and understood them. The sepoys in turn, trusted their officers and relied on them. The new officers replacing the old ones could not have the same relationship with the troops. The sepoys were not only strangers in a strange land but also became strangers in their own regiments. By the summer of 1915, the Indian units had become shattered shells of their former selves. And yet, amazingly, not only did they continue to fight, but did so with their usual zeal and ferocity. By November, the casualty figures of the Indian Corps exceeded 34,000—five thousand more than their original strength on arrival! The casualties among the British officers alone amounted to a thousand killed, wounded or missing.[19] It had become clear that employment of the Indian Corps in France was simply not feasible. As the newly trained British and Dominion formations became available for service, the Indian Corps was withdrawn in November, for other theatres of war nearer to its home base.

During the summer of 1915, there were no major operations on the British front, giving the exhausted units of the Indian Corps time to rest and recuperate. New battalions were despatched to France to replace some of the shattered units of the corps. Among these were 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab), who arrived at Marseilles on 29 May, as replacement of 9th Bhopal Infantry. They were posted to the 7th (Ferozepore) Brigade of 3rd (Lahore)

9. The Western Front 1915.

Division under the command of Major General Henry D' Urban Keary, Colonel of 91st Punjabis (3/8th Punjab). The battalion moved by train on 1 June and was billeted in the village of Croix Marmeuse. By 12 June, it was in the trenches in front of Neuve Chapelle, occupying the frontline between Oxford Street and La Bassée Road.[20]

The periods between major battles although quieter, were not idle, and casualties all along the front kept mounting with sickening regularity. Both sides frequently shelled each other, patrols were sent out to gather intelligence and to counter enemy patrols, and small-scale attacks and minor operations were launched for limited gains. The threat from snipers was always present and they took a heavy toll. The troops were also constantly engaged in improving the trenches and other defences. This was the routine in which the 89th Punjabis found themselves in June 1915. "Although no major fighting fell to their lot, they did much useful work" manning the defences, sending out fighting patrols, and enduring the hardships of trench warfare, suffering more than 300 casualties in the process.

The battalion suffered its first casualties due to enemy snipers on 16 and 17 June. On both occasions, Havildar Charagh Din went out in broad daylight to locate and silence the snipers. After this, the battalion started training its own snipers. The battalion soon got a taste of artillery shelling, when on 18 June, their gunner observation post was destroyed by enemy fire. On 25 June, the battalion lost its first officer due to enemy action, when Captain Burdett was killed by a German sniper. The battalion was relieved on 28 June, moving to billets at Bout Deville. Between 6 and 15 July, it was again on the frontline, this time at Duck's Bill. Here, the enemy shelling was more frequent. After the rains on 14 July, the battalion had its first experience of mud, as trenches turned into morasses, and it was with considerable difficulty that they extricated themselves from the

trenches on relief. After another spell in the trenches between Oxford and Church Streets from 30 July to 16 August, the battalion went into brigade reserve at La Couture. Here, they practiced the use of new gas masks with tube mouthpieces and glass eye pieces. These were quite an improvement on the original face-pads, which were fitted over mouth and nostrils.

The end of August again found the battalion on the frontline, this time in front of Rue du Bois, from Bond Street to Boar's Head, just twenty yards from the enemy. Considerable patrol activity took place during this period, the 89th Punjabis relishing the opportunity to take the battle to the enemy. On 1 September, a patrol of three under Havildar Harnam Singh came across a listening post with fifteen Germans inside. The patrol attacked and bombed the post. On being counter-attacked, they again bombed the Germans and drove them back with effective fire. On 9 September, as the battalion was being rotated to the rear, the Germans started strafing them. Havildar Sheorattan and Sepoy Sirinewas Misr on their own initiative, crawled towards the enemy trenches in broad daylight and silenced one of the guns with hand grenades. By 23 September, the battalion was back in the same trenches, but this time, everyone was tense with excitement at the prospect of taking part in the coming Allied offensive.[21]

In the meantime, 93rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab), then employed in canal defence at Qantara in Egypt, received its orders to move to France. The news was received with great excitement, as the men were impatient to go into action. The battalion reached Marseilles on 18 September, and entrained the same evening for Merville, arriving there three days later; just in time to take part in the Battle of Loos about to get underway. It was posted to 19th (Dehra Dun) Brigade of the 7th (Meerut) Division.[22]

The Battle of Loos: After the lull in fighting during the summer, the French planned another offensive in Artois in the north, and Champagne in the south. The plan was to simultaneously attack

both ends of the German salient and to drive them to the River Meuse. They requested the British to take over the French sector astride the River Somme, thus freeing French forces for the main offensive, and to launch a subsidiary attack on their own front on a five-mile frontage between Lens and La Bassée to tie up German forces there. The British First Army was to launch its offensive southwards from La Bassée Canal to Loos, attacking at various points to keep the Germans in doubt about the main objective of the offensive, and to cut German communications between Lille and Soissons. The Indian Corps, deployed due north of Neuve Chapelle, was to advance in its sector and try to assist the main offensive by turning the German defences at La Bassée from north.

The offensive opened on 21 September, with a four-day artillery barrage all along the front. On 25 September, the guns lifted and tremendous clouds of smoke were released to mask the attack, followed by chlorine gas. This was the first use of chemical weapons by the British, and almost became a disaster, as the wind changed in the Indian sector. The gas was turned off just in time but still caused serious interference in the movement of troops. The attack on the Indian front was carried out by the 20th (Garhwal) and 21st (Bareilly) Brigades of Meerut Division, with 19th (Dehra Dun) Brigade in divisional reserve. The Lahore and 19th British Divisions were holding the rest of the front.

The attack initially went well, and the German first line defences were breached, but then it ran into stiff German resistance. The divisional reserves could not move in support because of congestion in the frontline and communication trenches due to the gas released earlier, and the advancing brigades had to fall back after suffering heavy losses. Allied forces all along the front met with a similar fate and by 27 September, the offensive had collapsed. The French however, continued their futile attacks until November, when the offensive was finally abandoned. The British casualties at Loos were 48,267 men—4000 of them in the

Indian Corps, while the French and German losses were almost 200,000 men each.[23] The carnage on the Western Front would go on for another three years, but the sepoy's role in it was over. The Battle of Loos was the last major engagement of the Indian Corps in France. By 10 November, all units of the corps had been relieved on the frontlines, and in January 1916, the last troops left France for other battlefields. However, the Indian Cavalry Corps stayed back and continued to serve in France till 1918.

On 24 September 1915, as British guns were pounding German positions, the 89th Punjabis were issued smoke bombs for use the next day. As the attack got underway, the battalion opened up an intense fire on the enemy. They were ordered to advance once the Germans had vacated their first line trenches following the attack by the Meerut Division. The battalion stood to arms all day long, waiting for orders to advance. Jemadar Bagga Singh with a field telephone lay under the enemy's barbed wire throughout the day, sending intelligence about German dispositions, troop movements, state of their barbed wire defences, and positions of machine gun emplacements. During the night, patrols were again out in force, cutting the enemy's wire and throwing grenades into their frontlines. One of these patrols under an Indian officer was detected and three men were wounded. As the Germans came out to finish them off, Naik Suleiman turned on them single handed and drove them back with grenades, allowing the party to make its way back safely. He was awarded the IOM for his gallant action.

By 26 September, it was clear that the offensive had failed, and the routine of 'normal' trench warfare was resumed. On 3 October, the battalion was relieved in the trenches for a two-week rest. On 27 October, it vacated the trenches for the last time, spending the next few weeks resting in the rear. In November, Lieutenant Colonel Campbell left to command 9th (Sirhind) Brigade, and Major NM Geoghegan took over the battalion. On

13 December, the 89th Punjabis arrived at Marseilles, embarking for Port Said the same night *en route* to Basra.[24]

On 23 September, just two days after their arrival on the front, the 93rd Burma Infantry moved into position just north of Pont du Hem on the Estaires-La Bassée road, as part of the Meerut Division's reserve. On the morning of 25 September, as the Garhwal and Bareilly Brigades launched their attack, the battalion marched to the support trenches at Rue de Bacquerot, and then during the afternoon, to the frontline through the many miles of communication trenches. But as the advance of the attacking brigades faltered, the battalion was ordered back to Rue de Bacquerot to make room for the retiring troops. The night was spent in the open under a continuous downpour. Next morning, the battalion moved to the frontline near Neuve Chapelle to relieve Bareilly Brigade, which had suffered badly during the preceding day. Their first experience of the trenches was most unpleasant, as the rains continued for the next few days, turning the trenches into a sea of mud. The enemy also kept up a heavy fire, resulting in over twenty casualties. Most of the time was spent recovering the dead and wounded lying in front of the lines. The battalion was relieved on 28 September, and it took some companies almost twelve hours to extricate themselves from the mud.[25]

After a spell on the frontline in the Givenchy Sector during October, Dehra Dun Brigade took over the trenches opposite Richebourg St. Vaast on 2 November, with 93rd Burma Infantry in the frontline. It again rained during their stay, and the trenches became filled with water, which at places was waist high. The weather was bitterly cold with water in the trenches covered by a quarter of an inch thick layer of ice in the morning. It was in these conditions that the battalion spent six continuous days on the front without any protection. The troops suffered terribly, and on relief, more than half the battalion was unable to walk due to severe frostbite. This was their last stint on the frontline, and by

23 November, the battalion had arrived in Marseilles. During their stay in France, 93rd Burma Infantry suffered a hundred battle casualties besides many cases of severe frostbite. On 3 December, the battalion embarked on *SS Taroba* and *SS Cawdor Castle* for Port Said, on their way to Basra. They had a narrow escape, when *SS Cawdor Castle* encountered two German submarines in the Mediterranean. One of the submarines fired at the ship but missed. "The men fell in and behaved splendidly without the slightest excitement".[26]

6
The Mesopotamian Campaign

The Mesopotamian Campaign began as a small security measure to protect British oil interests in the Persian Gulf but soon developed into a major theatre of war of no particular strategic significance. Even before Turkey's entry into the war, a Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force composed of the 6th Indian Division under Major General Charles Townsend had sailed from Bombay in October 1914, to occupy the oil installations at Abadan. Meeting little resistance, the division then moved up to occupy Basra. The British then decided to occupy the whole of Basra Vilayet (province), ostensibly to safeguard approaches to the territory already conquered. It was also claimed that a demonstration of strength to the Arabs would help safeguard Egypt and enhance British prestige among the Orientals. British obsession with prestige was a recurring theme, which was put forward as an excuse for further moves of conquest, but the main motivation seems to have been pure and simple greed.

In March 1915, the expeditionary force was reinforced by the 12th Indian Division, and the force, now the size of an army corps, started fanning out northwards. Qurna at the junction of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates had been occupied in December 1914; Ahwaz in the Persian Arabistan was secured in April 1915; Amara on the Tigris was taken in June; and Nasiriyah on the Euphrates in July. The Turks were taken by complete surprise and made only feeble attempts to resist the British advance.

Persian Arabistan:[1] On 12 January 1915, the 90th Punjabis (2/8th Punjab), then stationed at Nasirabad, received their mobilization orders. The battalion sailed for Basra on 30 January, with 11 British and 14 Indian officers, and 676 other ranks under Lieutenant Colonel RJT Savi, as part of 12th Infantry Brigade. The

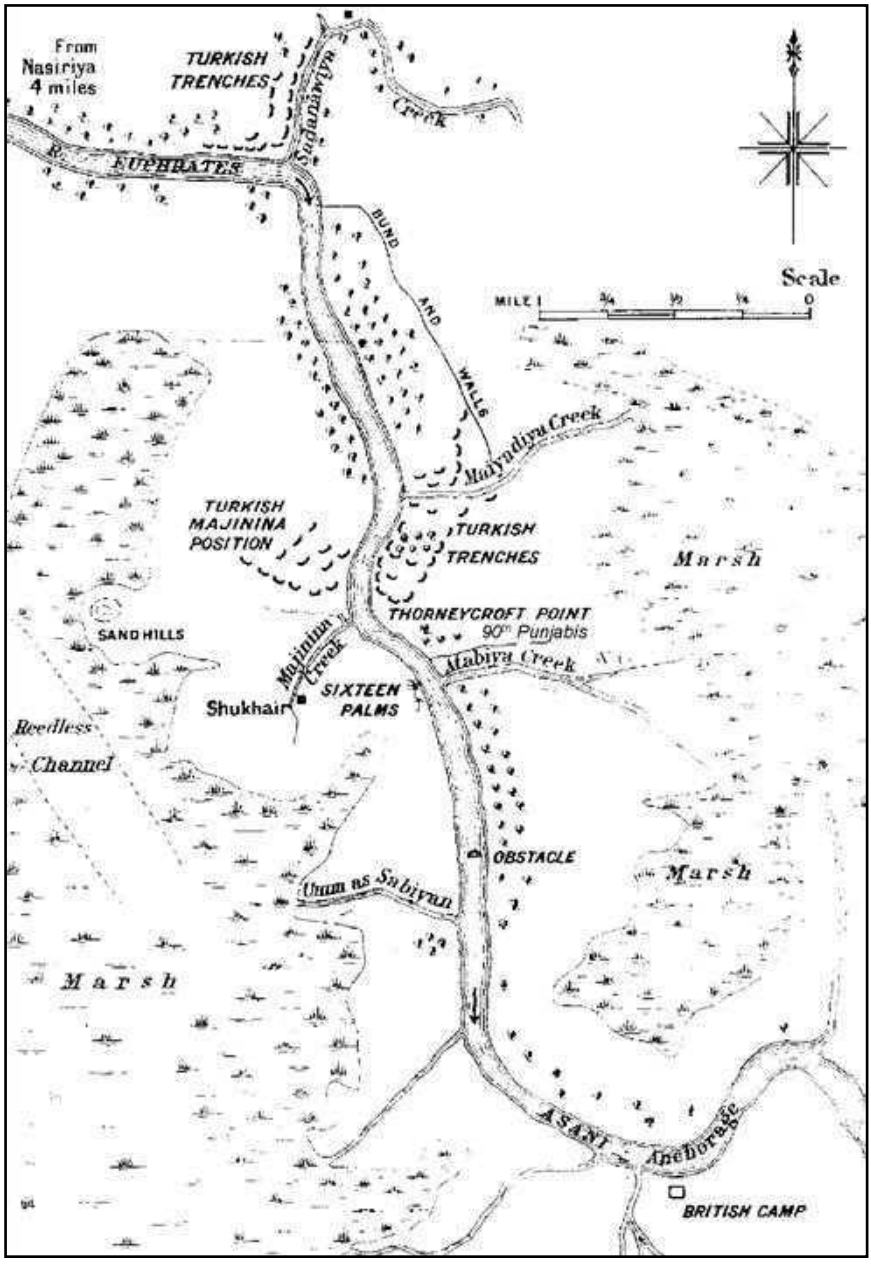
brigade joined Major General GF Gorringe's newly formed 12th Indian Division. During February, the battalion was stationed at Qurna. On 3 March, two double-companies were despatched to the Persian Arabistan as part of a column to secure the oil fields at Ahwaz. The rest of the battalion joined them two weeks later. In April, General Gorringe led his division into Arabistan to check a Turco-Arab force advancing eastwards from Amara. By 4 May, the 90th Punjabis had joined the main column, then advancing along the River Karun. Next day, news was received that the Turkish force had crossed the River Karkha at Illa, and General Gorringe hurried forward in hope of engaging them. On 8 May, the column reached Illa, only to learn that the Turks had retired beyond Khafajiyeh. Leaving 90th Punjabis at Illa, the force, now divided into two columns, advanced on both sides of the Karkha in pursuit of the Turks, who were seen retiring towards Amara. In the meantime, General Townsend's division was advancing towards Amara, which he took on 3 June.

By the end of May, Persian Arabistan had been cleared of the Turks and the oil pipeline from Ahwaz to Abadan was secure. Although the operations had not entailed any major fighting except skirmishes with hostile Arab tribesmen, the troops suffered greatly due to heat, exhaustion and disease. On 26 May, the 90th Punjabis arrived at Khafajiyeh and on 8 June, marched to Bisaitin to join 12th Brigade, which was to escort a cavalry regiment and a field battery to Amara. The desert march was carried out in intense heat with scarce and brackish water, by troops already exhausted by weeks of campaigning. However, no man of 90th Punjabis fell out, and Amara was reached on 18 June. A week later, the battalion returned to Basra by river steamers.

Capture of Nasiriyah:[2] With Ahwaz and Amara secure, the British now turned their attention towards Nasiriyah on the River Euphrates, whose capture was considered essential for securing the Basra Vilayet. Nasiriyah is situated about seventy miles west of

Qurna at the southern end of Shatt al Hai. The area around the town is rich agricultural land surrounded by marshes. On 27 June 1915, a British force composed of 30th Infantry Brigade along with divisional troops and artillery of 12th Indian Division, moved out from Qurna under the command of Major General Gorringe. The force was accompanied by a naval flotilla, and the move was carried out mostly on river craft. On 6 July, the force arrived in front of the Turkish defences about four miles south of Nasiriyah and set up camp at the Asani Bend. The Turks were holding both banks of the Euphrates with their outer flanks protected by marshes. On the right bank, their trenches lay behind Majinina Creek and on sand hills towards the west. On the left bank, their position was situated on both sides of Maiyadiya Creek. The positions were well-fortified and supported by artillery. General Gorringe decided to call for reinforcements before attacking the Turkish positions.

On 8 July, the 90th Punjabis proceeded up the Euphrates, moving along the left bank of the river. On 12 July, two companies of the battalion arrived at the frontline on the left bank, about 1200 yards south of Thorneycroft Point. The battalion suffered its first casualties of the campaign when two men were wounded during reconnaissance of Turkish positions. During the day, the Punjabis repulsed three attacks by the Turks on their position. Next day, the rest of the battalion arrived and occupied the extreme right flank of the British force. On 13 July, a British attack on the right bank failed in its objective of occupying Sand Hills but extended the British line up to Sixteen Palms-Sukhair. General Gorringe sent for more reinforcements and the next several days were spent extending and improving the frontline trenches. The heat was intense and the men suffered considerably. Lieutenant Colonel Savi, the Commanding Officer and Lieutenant Colonel Strahan, the Second-in-Command were placed on sick list and command devolved on Captain Butterfield.[3]



10. Operations near Nasiriyah, July 1915.

By 20 July, another brigade along with more artillery had arrived and General Gorringe decided to attack frontally on both banks of the river. At 0530 hours on 24 July, under cover of an artillery barrage, the 12th Brigade launched its attack on the left bank on a frontage of 200 yards. The attack was led by the 2nd Royal West Kent Regiment with two double-companies of 90th Punjabis in close support. The rest of the battalion covered the attacking force with machine gun and rifle fire from the right. The advance was "carried out with great dash and gallantry", and the Turkish trenches were taken after fierce close quarter fighting. The Turks offered stiff resistance, but by 1000 hours, their positions on the left bank had been completely overrun.

Captain Butterfield received the DSO, while Lieutenant PJR Wigley and Second Lieutenant AL Hill received the Military Cross for gallantly leading the assault.[4] Sepoy Partab Singh was awarded the IOM for continuing the attack despite receiving two bullet wounds in his right arm. This young soldier was then again wounded; losing two fingers and was unable to handle his rifle. He refused to go back and remained engaged in tending the wounded. Lance Naik Kunda Singh received a posthumous IOM for carrying a wounded NCO back to the lines over a distance of a hundred yards, while exposed to heavy enemy fire.[5] Meanwhile on the right bank, 30th Indian Brigade was also successful in its attack and the Turks fled towards Nasiriyah. Next day, they evacuated the town, which was then occupied by the British. During the battle, the British suffered 533 casualties including 9 killed and 36 wounded in 90th Punjabis.

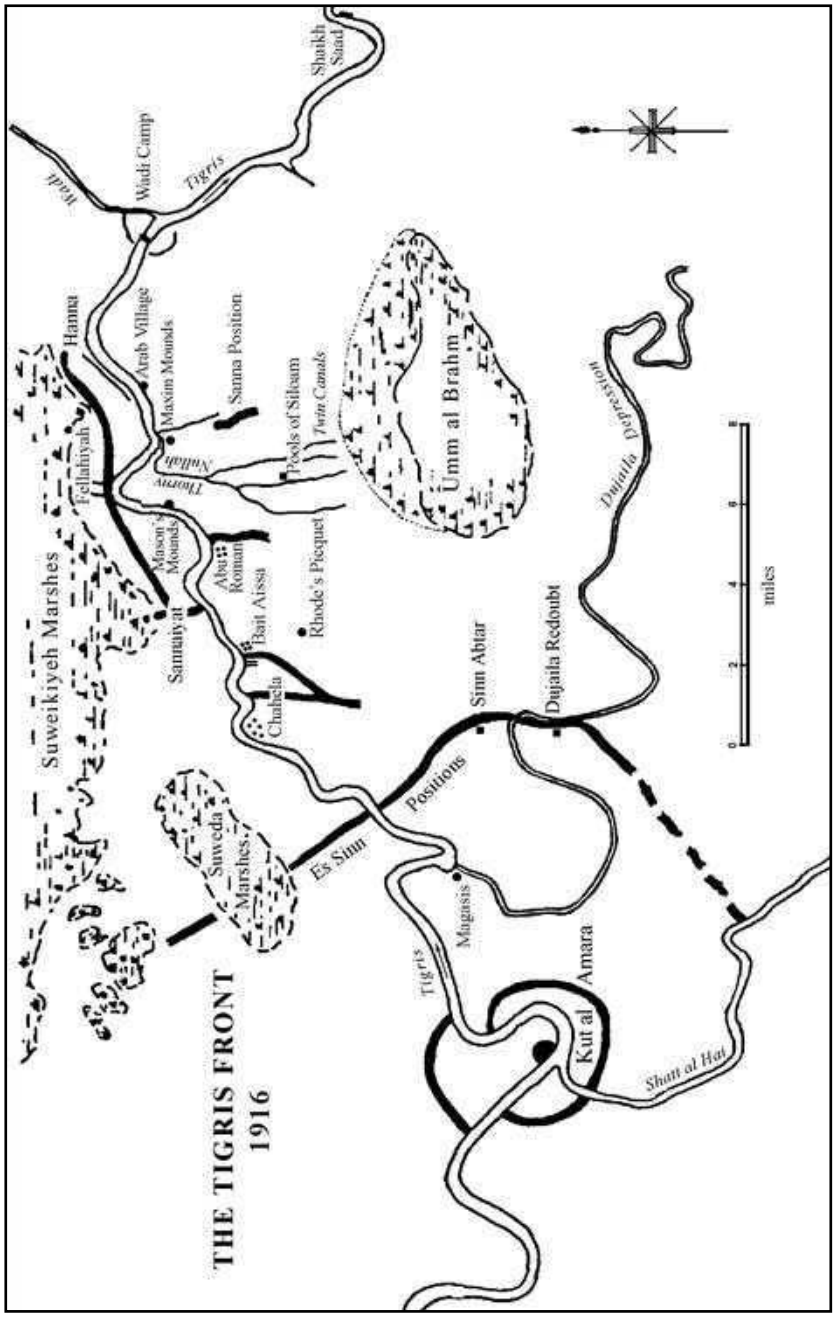
With the capture of Nasiriyah, all objectives set by the British in Mesopotamia had been attained. But now, it was felt that occupation of Kut al Amara, 90 miles up the Tigris would further help consolidate the gains. Accordingly, Kut al Amara was taken on 28 September by Townsend's 6th Indian Division, and on 5 October, Aziziya, a further 65 miles upstream was captured by

11. British Advance into Mesopotamia 1914-18.

the cavalry. This brought the British tantalizingly close to the fabled city of Baghdad. The British Government could not resist the temptation and gave its approval to take the city. It also decided to reinforce the theatre with the two Indian divisions in France. But Townsend's move was delayed by a critical month, while he waited for supplies to arrive.

The British supply system in Mesopotamia was woefully inadequate and heavily reliant on river craft, which were not only slow and in short supply, but were also dependent on the water level of the rivers, which started falling as winter approached. It was not until 11 November that adequate supplies had been stocked, and General Townsend was able to move out towards the Turkish positions at Ctesiphon. Here, the British suffered their first major reverse. The Turks had reinforced their positions and were well-entrenched, while the British troops were exhausted after a long summer's campaigning. The British attack was repulsed with heavy casualties and Townsend decided to retire to Kut al Amara and wait for relief. Kut is located in a loop of the Tigris and was defensively a very strong position. In December, the Turks invested Kut al Amara, and after several failed attempts at storming it, decided to starve the British garrison into submission.

As reinforcements started arriving in Mesopotamia, a hastily assembled force designated as the Tigris Corps was formed under Lieutenant General Aylmer for relief of the besieged troops at Kut al Amara. The corps included the newly arrived 7th (Meerut) Division from France besides other troops from Egypt and India. The 3rd (Lahore) Division joined the corps later, in January 1916. The Turkish situation also improved, as crack troops from Gallipoli started arriving in Mesopotamia following the British withdrawal from the Dardanelles. As the British prepared for their advance, the Turks, leaving a small force at Kut al Amara, moved down to occupy strong defensive positions on both sides of the Tigris. These included the Es Sinn and Shaikh Saad defences on

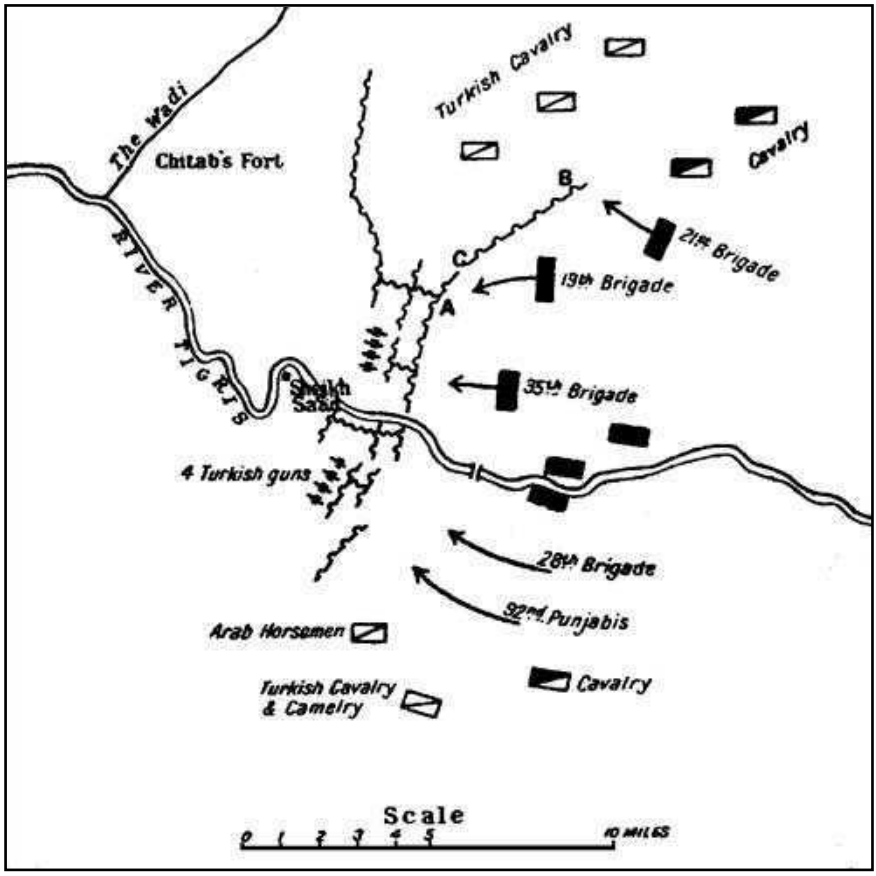


12. The Tigris Front.

both sides of the river, and a series of defensive lines on the left bank. The first of these was at Orah, followed by well-developed trench complexes at Umm al Hanna, Fellahiyah and Sannaiyat. The last three were especially formidable, being protected on the west by the Tigris and towards the east by the marshy lake of Suwaikiya.

The Battle of Shaikh Saad:[6] The 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab), who had spent the year guarding the Suez Canal, arrived at Basra on 24 December 1915. Next day, they proceeded to Ali Gharbi on the Tigris by river craft to join the 19th Brigade of 7th Division. On 4 January 1916, the 19,000 troops of Tigris Corps advanced towards Shaikh Saad, thirty miles upstream. Moving in two columns on both sides of the river, they arrived at Shaikh Saad the next day. The town was situated in a loop of the river on the right bank, with Turkish trenches running out from both sides of the river. It was defended by about 4000 troops, who were later reinforced by several thousand more. The weather was misty and rainy, while the terrain was flat, with hardly any cover for the troops. The British plan of action was to threaten the Turks' left flank while driving their right into the Shaikh Saad loop and hold them there until they were defeated. At the same time, the 12th Division, then operating on the Euphrates, was ordered to move up the Shatt al Hai to Butaniyah in an effort to draw Turkish troops from the Tigris Front.

On 6 January, the 92nd Punjabis were ferried across the river to reinforce the Right Bank Column under General Kemball. The attack commenced on both banks but could make no headway as the well dug in Turks swept the open ground with lethal fire. The 92nd Punjabis, who had moved up in support of 51st Sikhs, suffered 24 casualties and retired to a nullah in the rear. During the action, Subedar Major Firman Ali displayed conspicuous gallantry when despite being wounded twice, he continued to command his company and lead the men by personal example.



13. The Battle of Shaikh Saad, 7 January 1916.

The next day, General Aylmer decided to turn the Turkish left flank. General Kemball on the right bank was to follow up as soon as the attack had succeeded. While the attack against the Turkish left again bogged down, General Kemball's column was more successful. The 92nd Punjabis advanced to the firing line at 1430 hours, and along with 28th Brigade, charged over 300 yards of open country, carrying the Turkish frontline trenches. Soon, the second line trenches were also taken, but then they came under fire both from the third line trenches as well as from the flank. The brigade was ordered to consolidate its gains and resume the attack

next morning. However, the troops were exhausted, and further operations were deferred for another day. The battalion casualties included the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Maclachlan, who was wounded along with five other officers. Second Lieutenant OP Gwynne and Jemadar Sher Ali Khan were killed. The battalion was now under the command of Captain Rigg. That night, it rained heavily, turning the ground into a quagmire. The officers and men were without any blankets or bedding and spent a cold and wet night digging trenches in the open.

Throughout 8 January, the Turks kept up a heavy fire, but the next day, they inexplicably withdrew from Shaikh Saad and retired upstream towards Orah. Although the Turkish withdrawal is unexplained, it is possible that a shortage of food and heavy casualties were responsible for this. In any case, the Turks had done well, delaying the British advance and inflicting grievous casualties, which exceeded 4000, with 417 killed.

The medical arrangements in Mesopotamia were scandalous, with a severe shortage of medical personnel, equipment and transport. As a result, the large number of wounded at Shaikh Saad and in later battles suffered terribly. At Shaikh Saad, the wounded lay all night unattended in the open in pouring rain, as the few available doctors struggled to cope. Those who were evacuated had to endure a terrible journey on carts and boats, often piled five deep and then ended up in hospital, where the conditions were equally atrocious. It took the British several months to bring the situation reasonably under control.

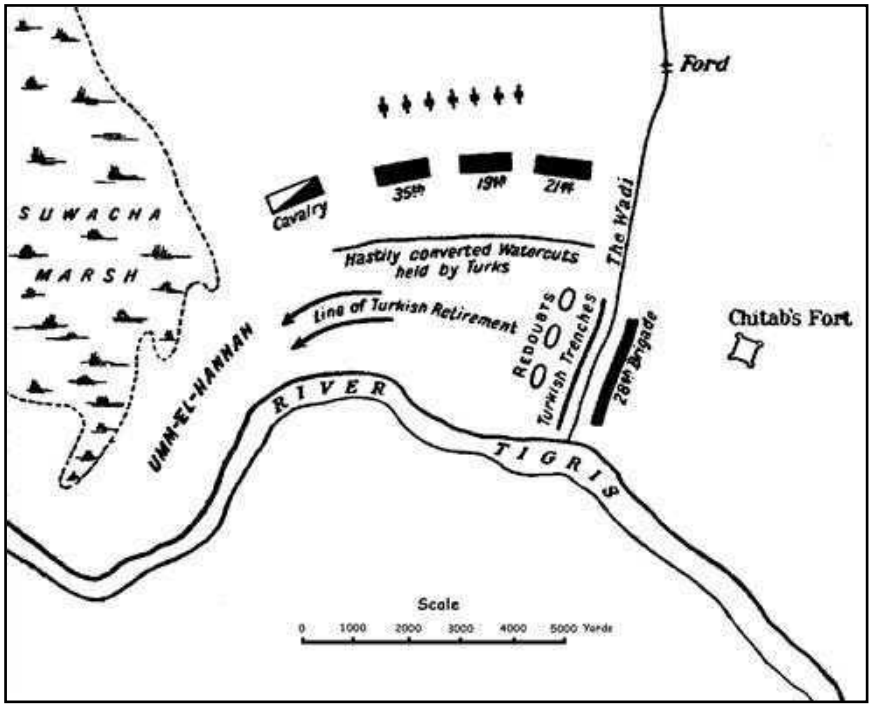
The Battle of the Wadi:[7] The Turks now took up positions on the far bank of a steep *wadi* that ran into the Tigris from the northeast, about eight miles upstream of Shaikh Saad and three miles downstream of the Hanna defile. Their right rested on the Tigris, while the left extended some two miles along the *wadi*, offering an exposed flank. This gave General Aylmer another opportunity to destroy Turkish forces on the Tigris Front. He planned to send

7th Division and the Cavalry Brigade in a wide flanking movement on the right, and then turning back towards the river, envelop the entire Turkish force. At the same time, 28th Brigade was to attack from the front to keep the Turks pinned down. Speed and surprise were essential for success.

The 92nd Punjabis crossed over to the left bank and rejoined 19th Brigade on 10 January. During the night of 12 January, the attacking force moved out to its assembly area and formed up, with 21st Brigade on the left, 19th Brigade in the centre, and 35th Brigade and cavalry on the right. The forward movement of the column was delayed due to thick mist, and it was not until 1000 hours that the infantry crossed the *wadi*. Although their crossing was undetected and unopposed, further delay was caused by trying to transport the artillery over the steep banks of the *wadi,* while the field ambulances were still struggling to cross at dusk.

Contact was established with the Turks soon after 1000 hours on 13 January, and by noon, 21st and 19th Brigades were engaged in heavy fighting. The delay in the attack had alerted the Turks, who realizing what was happening, rushed in troops from the frontlines. As 7th Division wheeled on the Turkish left flank, the Turks also turned to face the flanking manoeuvre, all the while extending their line and digging new trenches. The 92nd Punjabis on the extreme right of the British line went into action at noon and remained engaged in heavy fighting throughout the day. By 1430 hours, they were within 300 yards of the Turkish trenches, but had taken heavy casualties including five officers, who were wounded. By dusk, no substantial progress had been made. Meanwhile, the attack of 28th Brigade in the front had also failed with severe losses.

The British had failed to complete the ring around the Turks, who during the night escaped to Hanna undetected. Victory had once again eluded the British, while yet another fortified position blocked their way to Kut. The British suffered more than



14. The Battle of the Wadi, 13 January 1916.

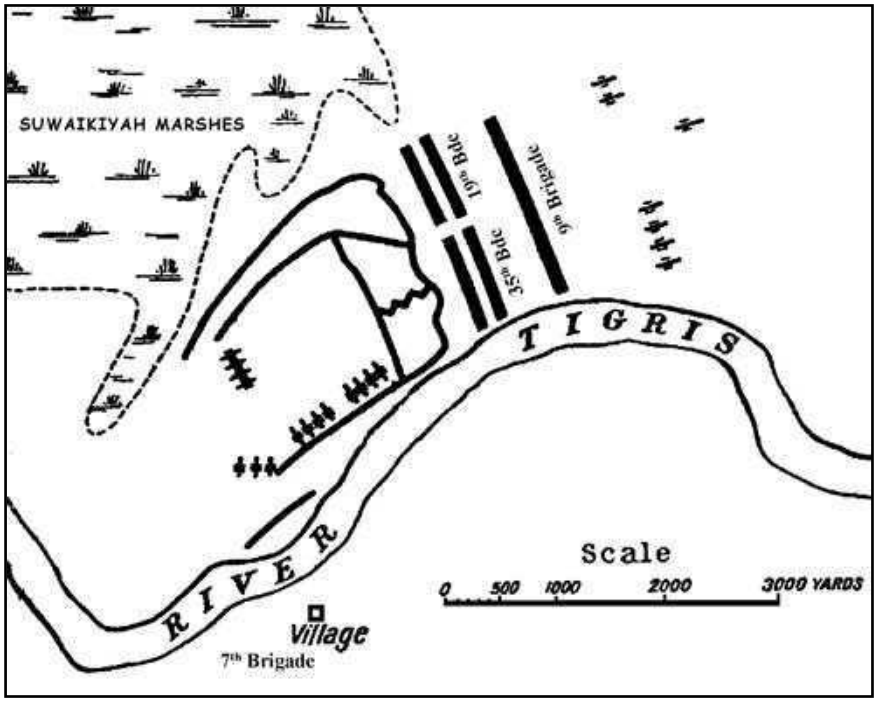
1600 casualties including 179 in 92nd Punjabis. Due to the failure of transports to keep pace with the troops, the wounded again lay unattended in the open.

In the first week of January 1916, units of 3rd (Lahore) Division began arriving in Mesopotamia. Among the first to arrive were 89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab) and 93rd Burma Infantry (5/8th Punjab). While the former marched towards the front, the latter proceeded by boat, arriving at Shaikh Saad on 13 January. Next day, 93rd Burma Infantry moved to Orah, and after spending a miserable night out in the open, crossed over to the right bank. When 3rd (Lahore) Division was reformed under Major General HDU Keary a few days later, the battalion was posted to 7th Indian Brigade.[8]

The Battle of Hanna:[9] General Aylmer had realized by now that it was not possible to breach the strong Turkish positions on the left bank of the Tigris. He now proposed an attack on the right bank by 3rd Division, with a simultaneous breakout by Townsend's force at Kut. But he was overruled by General Nixon, the British commander in Mesopotamia, who insisted on taking Hanna by frontal assault. This position was located in a defile twenty miles below Kut, between the Tigris and Suwaikiya marshes. It consisted of five parallel lines of trenches connected by communication and subsidiary trenches. The entire frontline extended for 1350 yards and was protected by wire entanglements. Aylmer decided to attack the position from the front with 7th Division, while 3rd Division was to cross to the right bank and enfilade the Turks from across the river. However, stormy weather prevented the bridging of the river and only 7th Brigade was able to cross. The weather and the mud hampered all movement, resulting in postponement of the attack. In the meantime, the Turks continued to strengthen their defences.

On 15 January, the 92nd Punjabis moved up to the frontlines. On 17 and 18 January, they advanced their line and were dug in within 300 yards of the enemy's main trenches. Heavy enemy fire continued throughout, and twelve men were killed and fifteen wounded. The next day, an advance by twenty men under Jemadar Hazara Singh failed, with three men killed and seven wounded. In the meantime, 7th Brigade and artillery of 3rd Division advanced on the right bank of the river. The 93rd Burma Infantry took up position opposite the Turkish frontline on the left bank and dug in, while the rest of the brigade was deployed near the Arab Village.

On the morning of 21 January, 7th Division attacked the Hanna position after heavy artillery preparation. Some Turkish trenches were overrun by elements of 35th Brigade but being outnumbered, they could not hold their position and fell back. The



15. The Battle of Hanna, 21 January 1916.

92nd Punjabis attacked on the right of the line, but they too were checked by heavy enemy fire and wire entanglements. And then, a severe storm blew in, making any progress in the muddy quagmire impossible. All communications broke down. The fire by 3rd Division from across the river was also not having the desired impact. By evening, the division had withdrawn to its former position after suffering heavy casualties. With so many British officers killed or wounded, the 92nd Punjabis were now under the command of Second Lieutenant EG Bland. The men, numb with cold, passed the night in trenches full of icy water under pouring rain. The division had suffered more than 2700 casualties, and the wounded again suffered from neglect. Most of them died during the night due to exposure, before they could be recovered the next day during a temporary truce.

In the meantime, on the right bank, the 93rd Burma Infantry had kept up an intense fire on the Turks, killing a number of them, as they retreated during the first onslaught by 7th Division. But after the failure of the attack, the Turks turned their attention on 93rd Burma Infantry, and they came under heavy fire. Lieutenant RJK Todd was killed, while bringing up ammunition on mules over open country. Captain GH Barrett and Subedar Major Mohammad Bakhsh were both wounded but continued to carry on their duties. The battalion, like their counterparts on the other side of the river, spent the night out in the mud in freezing rain. The fate of their wounded was also no different.[10]

After a month's heavy fighting, the British forces were exhausted. The foul weather persisted and a pause in operations occurred. However, firing on the frontlines continued and the 92nd Punjabis suffered a number of casualties. In February 1916, 93rd Burma Infantry was transferred to the 9th Brigade, which was commanded by Colonel LWY Campbell of 89th Punjabis. On 5 February, the 89th Punjabis arrived at Orah and were posted to 7th Brigade, while on 2 March, the 92nd Punjabis also crossed over to the right bank, joining 37th Brigade. This brought the three 8th Punjabi battalions together for the next big action of the campaign.

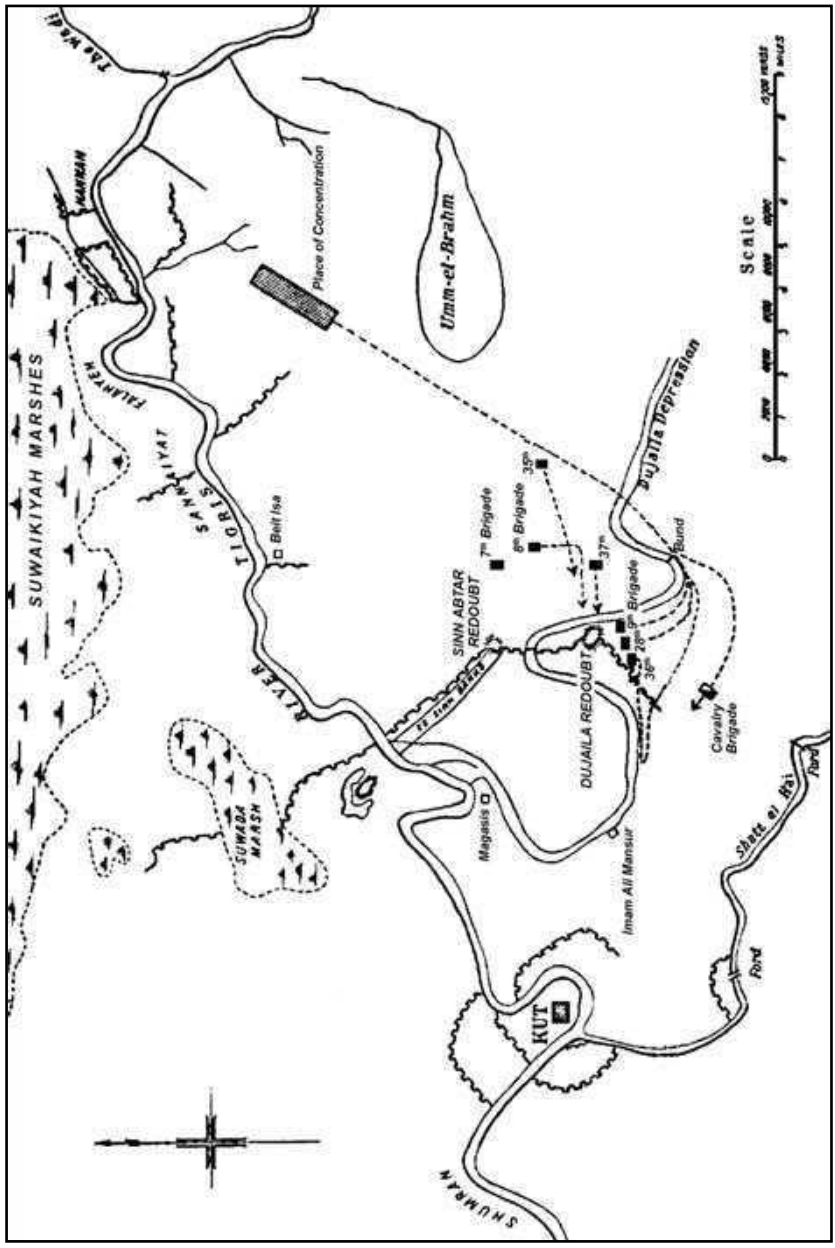
Meanwhile on the Euphrates Front, the 12th Division, which had moved to Butaniyah in January to divert Turkish attention during the Battle of Shaikh Saad, was ordered to return to Nasiriyah. The 12th Brigade withdrew on 5 February, but due to the hostile attitude of Arabs, a column was despatched the next day to cover the withdrawal of 34th Brigade. Two double-companies of 90th Punjabis under Captain CSB Martin accompanied the column, which took up position halfway between Butaniyah and Nasiriyah. On 7 February, as 34th Brigade reached the covering force, both were attacked by hostile Arabs from all sides. Heavy fighting ensued in which 90th Punjabis lost fourteen men killed, including

Captain Martin, Second Lieutenant Wynne and Jemadar Mewa Singh, with another 17 missing and 46 wounded. Lieutenant JC Brewer was awarded the Military Cross and Lance Naik Ghulam Ali a posthumous IOM for their gallantry in trying to rescue Jemadar Mewa Singh.[11]

The Battle of Dujaila Redoubt:[12] By March 1916, the British were increasingly anxious about the dwindling food supplies at Kut al Amara. Another attack was planned to relieve the besieged force, this time on the right bank of the Tigris. While 7th Division was to hold the line in front of Hanna, a powerful force of 37,000, which included 3rd Division along with 68 field guns, was to launch a surprise attack on the Turkish positions of Es Sinn. In the meantime, General Townsend was to breakout of Kut and link up with the relieving force.

The Turkish defences of Es Sinn consisted of trenches extending on both sides of the Tigris, with two fortified positions at Sinn Abtar and Dujaila on the right. From Dujaila, the lines had recently been extended towards Shatt al Hai. The ground between Turkish defences and British lines was flat with small mounds and dry water channels, the most prominent being the winding course of Dujaila Depression.

The British plan was to turn the right flank of Es Sinn position by seizing Dujaila Redoubt followed by capture of the entire position. The attacking force was divided into three columns. Column A consisted of 36th Brigade; Column B, the 9th and 28th Brigades; and Column C, under General Keary, the 7th, 8th and 37th Brigades. After an approach march of ten miles from the assembly point at the Pools of Siloam, the columns were to form up at their assigned positions by dawn on 8 March. Following the softening up of enemy positions by artillery, Column B under General Kemball was to attack Dujaila Redoubt, assisted by 36th Brigade on the left and 37th Brigade on the right. The 8th Brigade was to assault Sinn Abtar once Dujaila Redoubt



16. The Battle of Duiaila Redoubt, 8 March 1916.

was taken, while 7th Brigade was held in reserve. Everything was meticulously planned and utmost secrecy was exercised.

The entire force was directly under General Aylmer, who intended to keep a very tight control over the proceedings. The subordinate commanders were not allowed any initiative, as General Aylmer felt that on previous occasions, they had let him down. The force marched from the assembly point on the night of 7 March at 2220 hours. Two double-companies of 92nd Punjabis were detailed to escort ammunition columns following the attacking force, while the rest of the battalion remained at the Pools of Siloam and Two Canals Post.

Due to the sheer size of the attacking force and the logistics involved, the columns were unable to keep to the timetable assigned to them. The artillery was especially delayed, and it was well after dawn, when the different units formed up for attack. However, as the forward units arrived at the front, they found several Turkish positions unoccupied. But General Kemball suspecting a trap withdrew them. More time was wasted while artillery bombardment was carried out, fully alerting the enemy. The position in front of General Keary's column was also lightly held but the column was ordered not to attack until Kemball had captured Dujaila Redoubt. And by the time Keary did attack in late afternoon, the Turks had reinforced their trenches. With surprise gone and opportunities wasted, General Aylmer's offensive had failed before it even began.

At 0945 hours on 8 March, the 9th Brigade launched its attack on Dujaila Redoubt on a frontage of 600 yards, with 93rd Burma Infantry and 1/1st Gurkha Rifles in the lead. They were supported by the two brigades on their flanks, with 28th Brigade following in echelon on the left. By 1120 hours, the 9th Brigade was still 2000 yards away from the redoubt and 500 yards from the Turkish frontline trenches. The brigade came under heavy machine gun and rifle fire, while their own artillery was shelling the redoubt

instead of the Turkish trenches in front of them. The attack was continued over open ground with utmost gallantry and 93rd Burma Infantry suffered heavy losses including their Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Stevens, who was killed. A little progress was made, but by 1530 hours, all brigades had been checked. An hour later, the 8th Brigade joined the attack from the east and managed to reach the Turkish trenches, only to retreat after heavy casualties. In the meantime, 89th Punjabis waited with the rest of 7th Brigade to attack Sinn Abtar, but the attack never materialized due to the failure to take Dujaila. Their only action of the day was the capture of a Turkish patrol by Lance Naik Santa Singh and three scouts in the morning.

By dusk, none of Kemball's units had been able to reach the Turkish trenches in front of the redoubt and it was clear that the attack had failed. With the troops exhausted and chances of success of a renewed attack slim, Aylmer decided to withdraw his force. The 93rd Burma Infantry removed the bolts from the rifles of the dead men and buried them. "The retirement down the depression was a gruesome affair. Dawn was just appearing, and the banks of the depression were covered with line upon line of stretchers, and their suffering burdens".[13] Lieutenant AB Pestonji, the Regimental Medical Officer,[14] and Sub-assistant Surgeon Lal Singh did a splendid job in treating and evacuating the wounded to the rear. The British had suffered almost 3500 casualties, while the losses in 93rd Burma Infantry were 190—half of those engaged. Another casualty was General Aylmer, who was sacked soon after, his place being taken by General Gorringe.

The Action of Abu Roman:[15] As the British withdrew towards their camp, they also vacated the positions of Abu Roman and Mason's Mound. The Turks, who had not interfered with the British withdrawal, now followed up and occupied these two positions. They also strengthened their trenches at Beit Isa and Chahela. The only British troops in the area were 92nd Punjabis and

another battalion occupying Two Canals as an advanced post. The British now decided to occupy the line Mason's Mound-Thorny Nullah-Twin Canals to prevent the Turks from flooding the area. Accordingly, early in the morning of 11 March 1916, the 92nd Punjabis occupied the left portion of the line, while the 89th Punjabis and Connaught's Rangers moved out from Sanna to occupy the right. The 9th Brigade with 93rd Burma Infantry was moved to the Sanna position in support.

At 0350 hours on 11 March, the 89th Punjabis advanced towards Thorny Nullah with Connaught's Rangers on their left. The 89th Punjabis were to occupy Maxim Mounds and 400 yards of the nullah on the right. However, in the dark, the two battalions crossed the shallow nullah without being aware of it and at 0615 hours found themselves in front of the Turkish position at Abu Roman. Both sides were surprised. The two battalions immediately charged the Turkish positions despite heavy fire and occupied the first line trenches. At 0630 hours, contact with Connaught's Rangers was lost, but the two leading double-companies of 89th Punjabis gallantly continued the attack against the second line Turkish trenches.

In the ensuing firefight, all British officers of the two companies were wounded, and command was taken over by Subedar Zaman Shah and Colour Havildar Ghulam Mohammad, who continued the attack with skill and determination. Both the flanks of 89th Punjabis had become exposed and their situation was precarious. Sepoy Sher Muhammad made his way up a communication trench and covered the left flank of the battalion by throwing grenades at the enemy until he ran out of them. With their ammunition running out and having lost 75 percent of their strength, the two companies were ordered to withdraw at 0745 hours. After collecting the wounded, the companies withdrew in perfect order. Havildar Gurdit Singh, in command of a platoon, covered the withdrawal of the two companies, thwarting several

attempts by the Turks to follow up. Reinforcements were immediately sent forward to continue the attack, but as heavy rain started to fall, all movement became difficult and the attack was abandoned.

The performance of the battalion during the action was magnificent. The conduct of Subedar Zaman and Havildar Ghulam Mohammad was exceptional in the way they commanded their companies, both during the attack and later while retiring. Numerous other acts of gallantry were performed. Lance Naik Mahtab Ali was awarded the IOM for bringing in five wounded sepoys lying 150 yards in front of the enemy under intense fire. He was himself severely wounded while rescuing the last man. Captain Wood was seriously wounded while leading a bombing raid against a communication trench. He was taken prisoner along with his orderly Bhagwan Singh, who refused to leave his side. The officer later died of his wounds. The battalion's casualties during the action were 220 killed, wounded or missing.

First Battle of Sannaiyat:[16] Further British reinforcements arrived in Mesopotamia in March, including the 13th British Division under Major General Stanley Maude and heavy artillery. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London was of the opinion that given adequate artillery preparation, any entrenched position could be taken. So, with the food supply at Kut expected to end by 15 April, another relief attempt was planned for the first week of April. The spring floods were due and as the right bank of the Tigris was more vulnerable to inundation, General Gorringe chose Hanna for yet another attack. The 13th Division was to lead the assault with 7th Division in support. The 3rd Division was to advance on the right bank and capture Abu Roman. General Gorringe expected to take Sannaiyat within the week.

The 13th Division launched its attack on 5 April, only to find the Hanna trenches empty of Turks, who had withdrawn to Fellahiyah, a mile and a half behind. The first attack on Fellahiyah

was repulsed with heavy casualties. Another attack in the evening was successful in taking the lightly held position. Apparently, the Turks had held the position only to gain time and had retired to the more formidable position of Sannaiyat, about three miles further on. In the meantime, 3rd Division occupied Abu Roman, which had been abandoned by the Turks, who fell back to Beit Isa.

The 7th Division was now ordered to assault Sannaiyat early on 6 April. However, much delay occurred as they exchanged places with 13th Division, which was moving to the rear. The attack was launched at 0450 hours by 28th and 19th Brigades. The 92nd Punjabis, who had rejoined 19th Brigade in March, advanced in the second line. The advancing troops were stopped by intense Turkish fire, described by an eyewitness as a "torrent of death".[17] The division was ordered to dig in, still 600 yards short of its objective. During the night, the water levels of the river and the marsh rose and inundated the trenches, drowning many of the wounded. The division was compelled to fall back.

Advance was resumed the next day at 0940 hours, with the 92nd Punjabis in the firing line. After advancing 300 yards, the division was again checked, still 1000 yards short of the Turkish line. The 92nd Punjabis suffered 112 casualties including two officers seriously wounded. One of them, Captain Clibborn, later died of his wounds. The redoubtable Subedar Major Firman Ali was again in the thick of the battle. He took over command of No. 2 Double-Company, when the company commander was wounded, and continued the advance of the company until a halt was ordered. The rest of the brigade then aligned itself on the line he had formed. For his gallantry and initiative, he was awarded the Indian Order of Merit.[18]

The attack was resumed by 13th Division in the early hours of 9 April. They succeeded in reaching the Turkish first line trenches but got disorganized in the dark. As the Turks rallied, the British troops panicked and retreated in some disorder. With time

running out for the garrison at Kut, General Lake,[19] the new British commander in Mesopotamia, ordered a halt in operations against Sannaiyat and asked General Gorringe to make another effort on the right bank.

The Battle of Beit Isa:[20] General Gorringe decided to outflank the Turks by again trying to force the Es Sinn position on the right bank. To achieve this, the 3rd Division was to first extend its line westwards as far as possible and then occupy the abandoned British trenches in front of Sinn Abtar. The British line on the right bank extended southwards from Abu Roman towards the marsh of Umm al Brahm. Extensive inundation however, made all movement extremely difficult, both in the front as well as the rear. The Turks from their position at Beit Isa were believed to be responsible for much of this flooding, which they were causing by cutting the embankments. So, it was decided to capture the Beit Isa position before advancing towards the main objective.

On 11 April, two companies of 89th Punjabis went forward and occupied a position in some low sand hills halfway between the British line and the Turkish trenches at Beit Isa. The position was named Rohde's Piquet, after the officer who led the detachment. Reconnaissance that day showed that the Turks were occupying a forward piquet line several hundred yards ahead of the Beit Isa trenches. At 1500 hours on 12 April, 3rd Division advanced and pushed back the Turkish forward piquet line by about 1500 yards.

During the advance, the 89th Punjabis on the extreme left of the division suffered heavy losses, including Lieutenant HT Rohde, who was killed, while two officers were wounded. To protect the exposed left flank of the battalion, a platoon under Subedar Zaman Shah was detached and deployed 400 yards to the left of the firing line. Despite intense fire and heavy casualties, Subedar Zaman maintained his position at this critical time until support arrived at 2200 hours. Several attempts by the Turks to dislodge him were

foiled by his excellent fire control. For his gallant and inspiring leadership, he was awarded the IOM.[21]

The gap between Subedar Zaman's platoon and the rest of the battalion was being covered by a machine gun section under Lance Naik Shahamad Khan, deployed within 150 yards of the Turkish trenches. By late afternoon, the battalion was closely engaged with Turkish trenches at Twin Pimples. At 2100 hours, 37th Brigade on the battalion's right, withdrew several hundred yards, exposing 89th Punjabis' flank. The battalion's situation remained precarious until the arrival of support, late in the night.

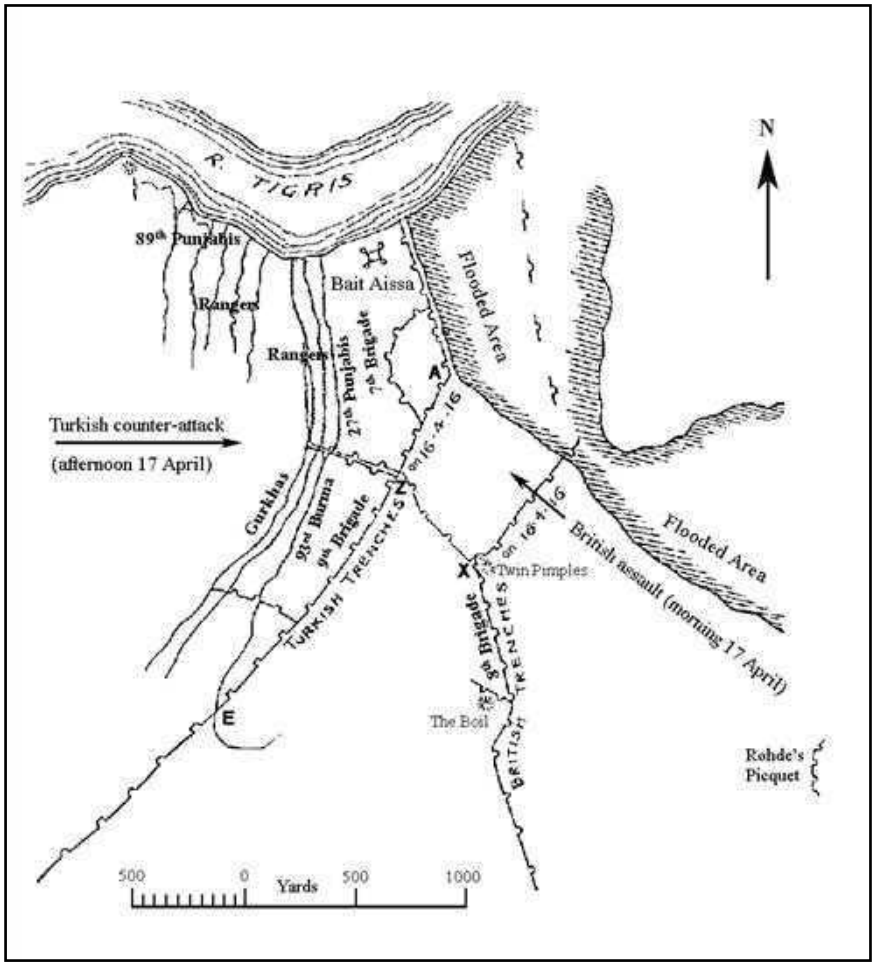
Meanwhile, Lance Naik Shahamad Khan and his men beat back three Turkish counterattacks and kept the gap secure for five hours until midnight, when they were ordered to withdraw. With most of his section having become casualties, the gallant NCO, along with Sepoys Hukm Dad and Fateh Ali, continued to work his machine gun, while under heavy enemy fire. When their machine gun was knocked out, they held their ground with rifles. While withdrawing, Shahamad Khan brought back his gun, ammunition and a severely wounded comrade. Then he went back alone and retrieved all remaining weapons and equipment "except two shovels". For his gallantry, Lance Naik Shahamad Khan was awarded the Victoria Cross. However, his two equally brave comrades received nothing despite strong recommendations.[22] The 89th Punjabis suffered 121 casualties during the day's action.

During the next two days, 13th Division crossed over from the left bank and moved to Abu Roman in support of 3rd Division. On 15 April, 7th Brigade occupied the enemy position at Twin Pimples. The position was then consolidated and the other brigades adjusted their lines accordingly, 400-900 yards from the main Turkish defences. The next objective given to 3rd Division was a series of six canals behind Beit Isa trenches running parallel to each other from the Tigris. Because of the flooded area along the river, the assault planned for 17 April by 7th and 9th Brigades was

to take place against Turkish trenches to the south of this area (marked AZ on map 17). Two canals running parallel to each other in a south-easterly direction were to direct the attack. 8th Brigade was to hold the line south of Twin Pimples, while 37th Brigade was held in reserve.

During the night of 16 April, the two brigades took their positions for the next day's attack. "The advance, preceded by a twenty-five-minute bombardment, was not timed to take place till 6.45 a.m. This left over an hour's daylight, during which everyone had to lie full length in their respective holes. It was a miserable hour. One yearned for hot tea and a cigarette, but even the smoke of the latter might have let the cat out of the bag. One could only lie, and wonder where one would be in a few hours' time. There is, nevertheless, something very thrilling in waiting for the opening of one's own bombardment. Watches have been synchronised, and everyone lies waiting, and pitying the poor devils in the burrows opposite. At a second before time a whistling is heard in the air, growing louder and louder … it passes overhead … there is a deafening crash, and lo! Hell is let loose on earth".[23]

At 0655 hours on 17 April, the two brigades launched their attack against the Turkish position of Beit Isa, 1000 yards away. The 7th Brigade was on the right, with the 89th Punjabis in the second line. The 93rd Burma Infantry was in the second line of 9th Brigade, behind two Gurkha battalions. The advance was carried out so rapidly that the Turkish trenches were still under bombardment when the attacking infantry reached their objectives. In a ferocious charge through the fire of their own artillery, the assaulting troops took the enemy trenches at the point of the bayonet, killing 300 and capturing another 180. The 89th Punjabis leap-frogged over the leading battalions of their brigade and occupied the mouths of the six canals on the right bank of the Tigris, their advanced post about half a mile ahead of the rest of the brigade. "This assault was carried out with such dash that the



17. The Battle of Beit Isa, 17-18 April 1916.

89th passed clear through our own artillery barrage".[24] Captain WR James received the Military Cross for leading the attack.

A desperate counterattack by the Turks at 1000 hours was easily repulsed. The Turks fell back to their trenches at Chahela, and the 3rd Division consolidated its position, having gained all its objectives without much loss. The right of the divisional front was held by 89th Punjabis, with the Connaught's Rangers and 27th Punjabis on their left. Next to them was 9th Brigade, with

1/1st and 1/9th Gurkha Rifles in front and 93rd Burma Infantry in support, left of Point Z. There was a gap of about 2000 yards between the left flank of 9th Brigade being held by 93rd Burma Infantry and 8th Brigade, which was occupying trenches ZX, and a line extending southwards of Twin Pimples.

As the 3rd Division prepared for the next day's operations, the Turks launched a furious counterattack at 1900 hours. The British were completely surprised by the ferocity of the Turkish attack, which was carried out with great gallantry despite horrendous casualties. The Gurkhas, who bore the brunt of the attack were soon overwhelmed and fled towards the rear in much disorder. The left flank of 93rd Burma Infantry was already exposed; the retreating Gurkhas also exposed their right. Although the battalion opened up an intense fire on the Turks, they soon ran out of ammunition. By 1930 hours, the entire 9th Brigade was in full retreat.

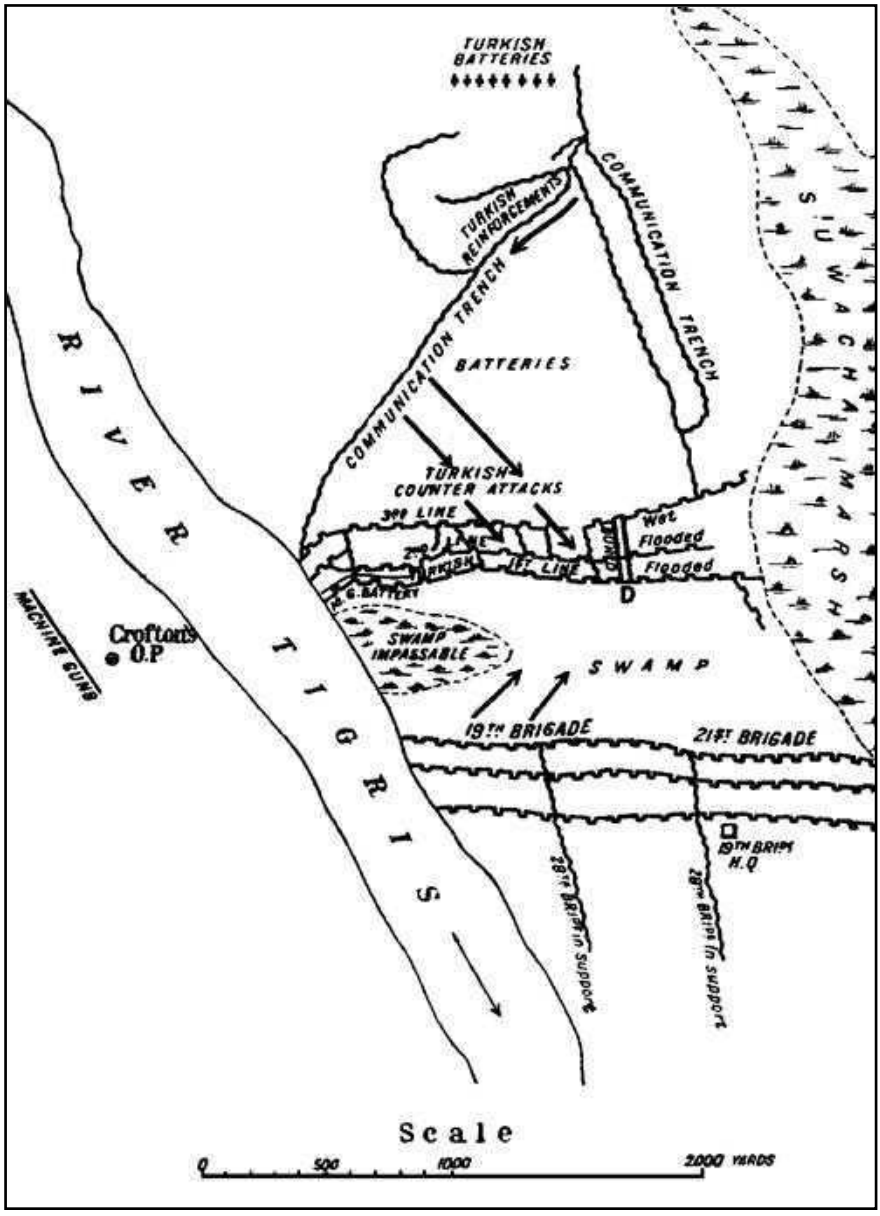
Absolute chaos reigned in the dim moonlight, as friends and foes mixed up in a confused mass and all attempts at reforming the units failed. Several British and Indian officers made desperate efforts to rally their men. Among these were Subedar Major Mohammad Bakhsh and Jemadar Indar Singh of 93rd Burma Infantry, who were able to gather parties of men from different units and form them into firing lines. Both were awarded the IOM for their courage and initiative.[25] Colonel Campbell, the Brigade Commander, rallied some troops near Twin Pimples and stopped the Turkish onslaught, which then swerved to the right towards 8th Brigade.

As the retreating Gurkhas swept through the lines of 7th Brigade, they also carried with them three companies of 27th Punjabis, opening up the brigade's front. The 89th Punjabis were thus cut off from the rest of the brigade. However, the remaining company of 27th Punjabis and Connaught's Rangers held off the Turks and the 89th Punjabis were able to withdraw

safely by 0400 hours. With the arrival of reinforcements, the Turkish attack was finally repulsed in early morning. Although the Turks had suffered some 4000 casualties, they had effectively broken the back of the British attack. The 3rd Division, already depleted by months of fighting, lost another 1600 men—twenty five percent of its effective strength, and was rendered unfit to carry out offensive operations. The 93rd Burma Infantry was reduced to 154 men out of the 300, who had gone into action earlier in the day, while the 89th Punjabis suffered 111 casualties including the gallant Subedar Zaman Shah, who was killed during the advance of 17 April.

Second Battle of Sannaiyat:[26] Over the next few days, all British attempts to regain lost ground were largely unsuccessful. The Turks had transferred troops from the left bank to the right before the Battle of Beit Isa, and it was thought that their position at Sannaiyat was much weakened. Taking advantage of this, the British commanders decided to make one last effort on the left bank. Sannaiyat was a complex of three lines of trenches 300 yards apart, situated about 400 yards from the British frontline. Even though the entire front including the forward trenches was covered by water, it was decided to proceed with the attack. After an intense artillery bombardment on 20 and 21 April, the attack was to be launched by 19th and 21st Brigades on 22 April. Three other brigades were in support. However, at the last moment, the 21st Brigade communicated its inability to advance due to the water, and it was left to the 19th Brigade to carry out the assault on its own.

At 0700 hours on 22 April, 19th Brigade launched its attack under the cover of artillery. The assault was led by 92nd Punjabis on the right and the Highland Battalion (Black Watch and Seaforth Highlanders) on the left. Due to the flooding, the total frontage was reduced to 300 yards. The attack was carried out rapidly over slippery mud and under heavy enemy fire; the two battalions



18. Second Battle of Sannaiyat, 22 April 1916.

advancing in perfect order. Captain AM Senior, commanding the leading company of 92nd Punjabis was mortally wounded early in the advance. The Turkish first- and second-line trenches, which were full of water and mud, were quickly taken. But then, the advance slowed down due to the quagmire; many men sinking in the mud up to their armpits. Despite the increased intensity of enemy fire, some of the leading troops managed to reach the third line of trenches. A Turkish counterattack was checked but further progress became extremely difficult due to heavy casualties and clogging of the weapons with mud. Captain EB Fawcett was killed, while Lieutenant AH Dobbs and most of the Indian officers of the battalion were wounded. Subedar Major Firman Ali was left in command but found himself alone with a dozen or so men, cut off from all support.

The brigade's reserves were moved but were soon checked by enemy fire. At 0735 hours, the composite English Battalion of 21st Brigade advanced in support of 92nd Punjabis. In the meantime, the Turks launched another counterattack. "Fighting with the greatest gallantry, Highlanders and Punjabis, most of them in mud and water up to their knees and many without the use of their rifles, beat back this counterattack at close quarters". As the Turks renewed their attack at 0800 hours, the English Battalion advancing on the right of 92nd Punjabis, on encountering deep water started retiring. This opened up the right flank of 92nd Punjabis, compelling them to give ground, which in turn exposed the right of the Highlanders. Having suffered grievous losses and cut off from all support, "the Highlanders and Punjabis fell back steadily and stubbornly". By 0820 hours, the assaulting troops were back where they had started. Both battalions had fought valiantly, but without proper support, it was impossible to hold the captured trenches. The 92nd Punjabis lost 155 officers and men, while 19th Brigade's strength was reduced by forty percent to 1223. As an informal truce ensued to retrieve the wounded,

General Gorringe and his commanders decided that it was impractical to renew the offensive.

Although all major operations on the Tigris Front had ceased, more misery was in store for 93rd Burma Infantry. On 23 April, 9th Brigade was ordered to capture an isolated Turkish trench system called Apex, on the southern end of Beit Isa. With Major Simpson killed and Major Haughton seriously wounded during the Battle of Beit Isa, the battalion was being commanded by Captain BE Morgan. The advance was led by 93rd Burma Infantry and Highland Light Infantry before dawn on 24 April. When day broke, the leading battalions had advanced 1500 yards but were still some 800 yards short of their objective, and encountering heavy enemy fire.

As the troops started to dig in, the Turks evacuated the position, and by evening, the entire position was clear of the enemy. The 93rd Burma Infantry suffered 40 casualties during the action (out of a total strength of 160). Captain Barrett was killed, while one British and five Indian officers were wounded, including Subedar Major Mohammad Bakhsh, who was shot in the head. As the grand old man was being carried away, bleeding profusely, he cried out, “Never mind Sahib, I’ll be back soon”. He never did; dying in the hospital three weeks later.[27]

The Turks had waged a skilful campaign, and their troops had shown great courage and determination in fighting the British to a standstill. The Tigris Corps was a spent force and the British finally decided to give up further attempts at relief of Kut al Amara. On 29 April, General Townsend surrendered his starving garrison to the Turks. The Tigris Corps had suffered 23,000 casualties trying to rescue him, but he never made any attempt to breakout or to assist the relieving force. The general and his officers went into a comfortable exile, while his troops marched to an appalling captivity, where more than 4000 died of starvation and neglect.

The British now adopted a defensive policy in Mesopotamia, and the rest of the year was spent in improving the communications and reinforcing the Army. Two more infantry divisions were raised, and the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force was reorganized into two corps: I Corps (3rd and 7th Divisions) on both sides of the Tigris, and III Corps (13th and 14th Divisions) towards the left of I Corps. The 12th Division was broken up and its place on the Euphrates was taken over by the newly formed 15th Division. By the end of the year, the British had about a quarter of a million men in Mesopotamia. Another significant change was the appointment of General Maude to the command in Mesopotamia. He was a marked improvement on his predecessors and soon had his demoralized Army back on its feet. But to be fair to Generals Aylmer and Gorringe, they never enjoyed the kind of advantages in men and materiel that Maude had at his disposal.

The 8th Punjabis suffered terribly during the fighting on the Tigris Front. The 92nd Punjabis and 93rd Burma Infantry were reduced to less than a hundred men each, while the total strength of 89th Punjabis was 164. In July 1916, the 89th Punjabis left Mesopotamia for India to recuperate. They spent the next fourteen months based at Nowshera in the Northwest Frontier Province, where they were frequently engaged in operations against frontier tribesmen, taking part in the Mohmand Blockade and the Chitral Relief Column. Their place in 7th Brigade was taken by the 91st Punjabis (3/8th Punjab), who arrived in Mesopotamia from Burma in August.

Although no major fighting took place during the summer season, the men continued to endure endless trench duties in the terrible heat. The lice that had plagued them in the spring were now replaced by swarms of flies, which made life unbearable during the day, while sand flies made them miserable at night. Dysentery remained a fact of life and there were periodic outbreaks of cholera. In July, all battalions were reorganized into four

companies of four platoons each. Each platoon was further divided into four sections.

The Action of As Sahilan: In the meantime, on the Euphrates Front, the 90th Punjabis were again in action during the summer, taking part in punitive operations against hostile Arabs near Nasiriyah. On 11 September, the battalion attacked and captured the village of As Sahilan. Sappers & Miners then proceeded to fire the village. As the battalion was retiring, it came under intense hostile fire and sustained 69 casualties including their Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Carleton, who was severely wounded, and Captain DB Morris, who was killed while trying to rescue a wounded sepoy.[28] Naik Jhanda Singh was awarded the IOM for bringing back Captain Morris's body under heavy fire despite being wounded himself.[29]

Capture of the Khudaira Bend:[30] By December 1916, the British were ready to resume offensive operations. During May, the Turks had vacated their strongholds of Beit Isa and Es Sinn on the right bank but were still holding positions in front of Shatt al Hai and in the Khudaira Bend of the Tigris. General Maude decided to clear the Turks completely from the right bank before renewing the advance towards Baghdad. On 13/14 December, Lieutenant General Marshall's III Corps and the Cavalry Division crossed Shatt al Hai, threatening the Turks' line of communication. Soon afterwards, 3rd Division started concentrating in Dujaila Depression in front of the Turkish position in Khudaira Bend. The attack was to be launched by 8th Brigade from the east and 9th Brigade from southeast. However, rains intervened again, delaying all operations for another month. The troops had a miserable time digging trenches in the incessant rain and driving back Turkish advanced posts while under constant fire. The 93rd Burma Infantry, now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel JH Whitehead, suffered several casualties at the hands of Turkish snipers.

In the meantime, on 16 December, a reconnoitring party of 91st Punjabis and 2/7th Gurkha Rifles from 7th Brigade was sent to the left bank to ascertain Turkish dispositions between Sannaiyat and Magasis. The seven men, three Punjabis and four Gurkhas, swam across the river on empty oil tins at night. Sepoy Naurang Singh and two Gurkhas drowned, while the rest returned after accomplishing their mission, utterly exhausted and numbed from cold. For their gallant exploit, Sepoys Narinjan Singh and Kishan Singh received the IDSM.[31]

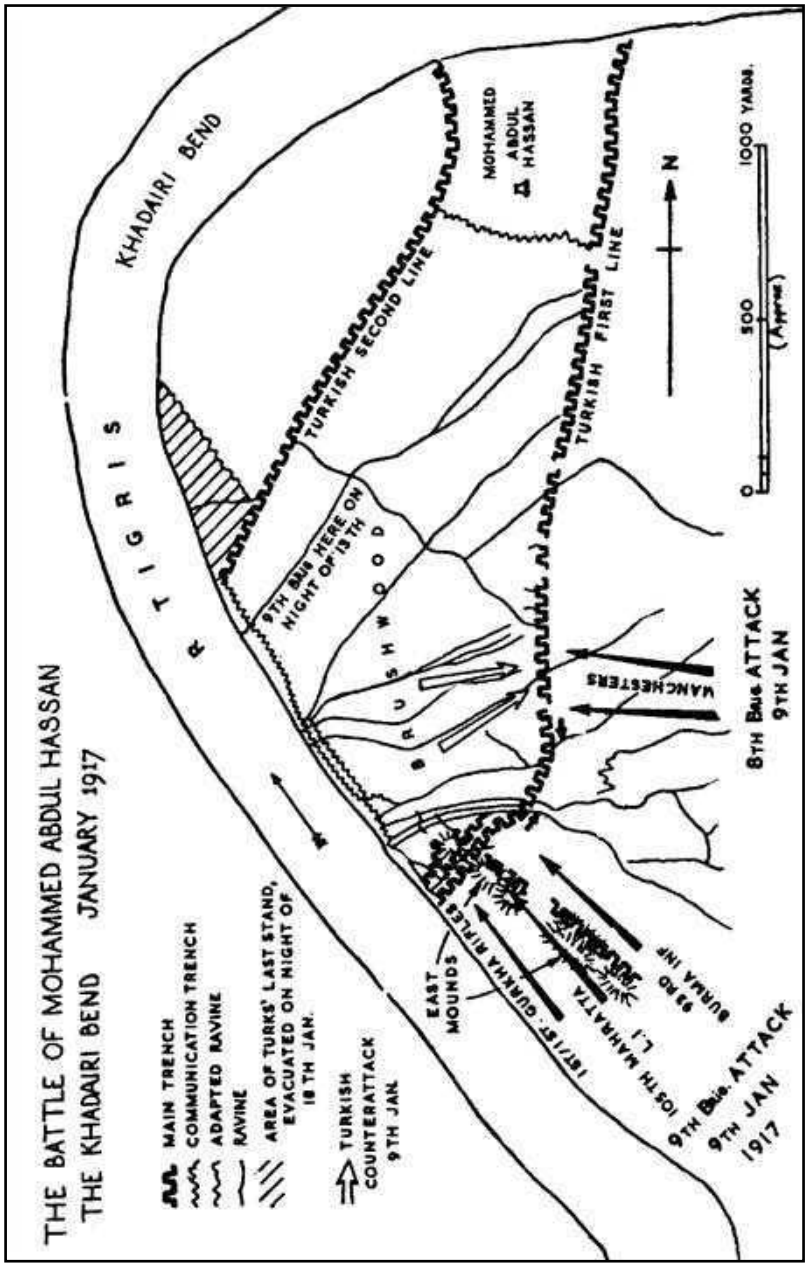
By early January 1917, the weather had improved, and the 3rd Division was ordered to attack Turkish positions in Khudaira Bend on 9 January. British frontlines were about 200 yards from the Turks; the 9th Brigade on the left and 8th Brigade on the right, with its right flank resting on the Tigris. The 7th Brigade was holding the riverbank from Chahela to Magasis. The Turkish position was composed of three lines of trenches with well-sited gun emplacements. The 93rd Burma Infantry was to launch its attack on the right of 9th Brigade, with B and D Companies in the lead.

The battalion spent a restless night in the frontline, waiting for the next day's attack. "The men were packed like sardines in Pioneer Trench. Sleep even in a feather bed would be fitful the night before an attack; under these conditions it was impossible; the intermittent rat-tat-tat of enemy machine guns added to the general uneasiness. There is a nasty sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach when you hear a machine gun spitting bullets from the exact point on which you, yourself, are going to advance next morning. You find yourself indulging in mental calculations as to how far apart the bullets are spaced, and the chance a man two feet wide has of meeting a space, and not a bullet. If you have not yet been in action, you wonder how it feels like to be wounded; if you have, visions of some ghastly wounds that you have seen somewhere previously, cross your mind. With a supreme mental

effort you dismiss the thought, and force your mind to think of pleasant things, happy days … anything to keep the nightmare away. Presently that accursed machine gun recalls tomorrow's business, and so the cycle of thought goes on, till, mercifully, dawn dispels it with its light".[32]

The dawn of 9 January broke with a heavy mist, which lasted till late afternoon. As the British artillery opened up for an hour's deliberate bombardment of Turkish trenches, the officers collected for breakfast, "… a somewhat cheerless meal. It is unpleasant looking round a circle of friends, and knowing that some are spending their last half-hour on earth. One wonders if one is among the latter, a thought that recurs persistently … faces look pinched and strained … there is an unnatural glitter in the eyes, the conversation is forced, and the slightest humour evokes an exaggerated laugh".[33]

At 0900 hours, the two brigades charged the Turkish trenches, bayoneting or capturing their occupants. The Turks were apparently taken by surprise, as they were still crouching in their trenches to escape the shelling and were unable to recover. The bombardment had been very effective, and the wire entanglements had been blown to pieces, offering no obstacle to the assaulting troops. The 93rd Burma Infantry quickly secured its objectives as the entire Turkish first line was overrun. Colonel Whitehead was wounded in the shoulder but continued to command the battalion. At 1000 hours, the Turks launched a fierce counterattack against the Manchester Regiment on the right of 93rd Burma Infantry. Lieutenant JG Swaine rushed to their assistance but was killed. As the Manchesters retreated in some disorder, it was left to A Company under Major Morgan to stem the attack, saving the entire line from crumbling. That evening, the Manchesters attacked and drove out the Turks, and recaptured the lost ground.[34] Subedar Lachman Singh received the IOM for stopping and rallying men of the Manchester Regiment during their retreat.[35]



19. The Capture of Khudaira Bend.

On 10 January, 3rd Division was ordered to consolidate its position, and 93rd Burma Infantry advanced 800 yards in successive waves to occupy a five-foot deep nullah about 400 yards in front of the Turkish second line. Next day, the 9th Brigade was ordered to "drive the enemy … into the river or compel them to surrender". The attack was to be launched by the 1st Highland Light Infantry (HLI), closely supported by 93rd Burma Infantry towards their right and rear. But unknown to the British, the Turks had been reinforcing their troops from across the river.

On the morning of 11 January, 1st HLI advanced towards the Turks, followed by 93rd Burma Infantry. As the leading troops of 1st HLI neared the Turkish line, the Turks rose up from their trenches to launch a fierce counterattack. In the ensuing hand-to-hand fighting, the Highlanders were overwhelmed and fell back, taking with them D Company of 93rd Burma Infantry, which had just left the nullah. However, the Turks did not follow up their attack vigorously and were pushed back. In the meantime, the 93rd Burma Infantry came under intense enfilade fire from Turkish guns at Kut. The men were trapped in the straight nullah, and the battalion was virtually massacred. Among those mortally wounded was their gallant CO Lieutenant Colonel Whitehead. Colonel Whitehead had taken over a shattered and demoralized battalion in May and put it back on its feet, inspiring them with his confidence and coolness under fire. He was still encouraging his men as he was carried away, bleeding and paralyzed from his wound. He died during the night.[36]

During the next few days, 9th Brigade was withdrawn from the frontline, exchanging places with 7th Brigade. The British now adopted the tactic of short deliberate advances by small parties of infantry supported by bombardment of the enemy positions. The Turks, realizing the hopelessness of their situation, withdrew across the Tigris on 18 January. During the eleven days of fighting in the Khudaira Bend, 3rd Division suffered 1693 casualties

including 188 in 93rd Burma Infantry. Between 20 January and 15 February, the Turks were also driven out of the Hai salient and Dahra Bend, thus clearing the entire right bank of the Tigris of all Turkish forces.

Third Battle of Sannaiyat:[37] By now, the Turks were considerably weakened on the Tigris and General Maude felt that he could defeat them by simultaneously attacking at Sannaiyat and Shumran, seven miles west of Kut. Accordingly, 7th Division was given the task of attacking Sannaiyat and holding the attention of the Turks, while III Corps crossed the Tigris at Shumran, thus cutting off the Turks' line of communication and retreat. A diversionary attack at Magasis was to create further doubts in the mind of the enemy. An attempt against Sannaiyat on 17 February by 21st Brigade was repulsed with heavy losses but succeeded in drawing the Turks' attention away from Shumran. A second attempt was planned for 22 February, this time by 19th Brigade, with 92nd Punjabis and 1st Seaforth Highlanders leading the attack. These two battalions had also led the attack on Sannaiyat ten months earlier and nearly succeeded in capturing the position.

Shortly after 1000 hours on 22 February, the two battalions advanced towards the Turkish lines, with 92nd Punjabis on the left. The advance was carried out in five waves and succeeded in rapidly capturing the enemy's first- and second-line trenches. Lieutenant FP Newbury of 92nd Punjabis was killed in No Man's Land as he led the third wave, while Captain AST Reilly and Lieutenants JH Christopher and GJ Mcade were killed in the Turkish trenches. As the troops consolidated their positions, the Turks launched two counterattacks but were easily repulsed. However, at 1220 hours, the Turks launched a heavier attack and were successful in driving out 92nd Punjabis. But the battalion was rallied by its Adjutant Lieutenant Harris and the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Maclachlan and quickly recaptured the lost ground. A few hours later, 28th Brigade advanced, extending

the British line on the right. The Turks launched several counterattacks but were repulsed with heavy losses, and the brigade consolidated its position. During the day's fighting, 92nd Punjabis suffered 220 casualties, including four British and four Indian officers killed.

In the meantime, as the Turks were rushing all available troops from Shumran and Kut towards Sannaiyat, III Corps threw pontoon bridges across the Tigris at Shumran and affected the crossing unmolested. The Turkish position on the Tigris had now become untenable, and during the night of 23 February, the Turks carried out a skilful withdrawal from Sannaiyat to escape being trapped by III Corps in their rear. The 7th Division had suffered a great deal in front of Sannaiyat, and it was only appropriate that the position should fall to this gallant formation. Despite British efforts to trap them, bulk of the Turkish forces was able to escape towards Baghdad, fighting an admirable rearguard action. However, the Turks had suffered grievous losses, and they had to abandon their strongholds of Kut al Amara and Ctesiphon.

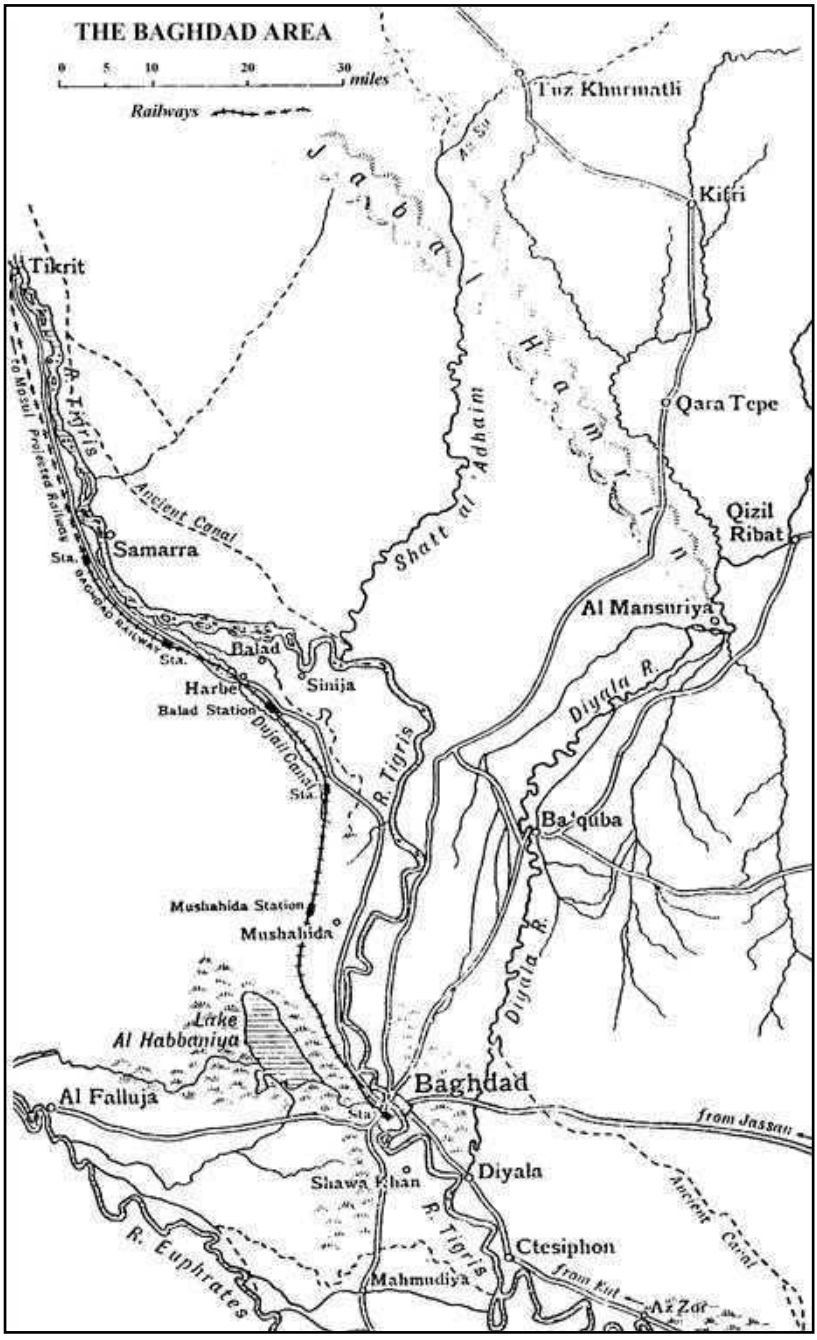
The Action of Shawa Khan:[38] After a few days' pause to reorganize; the British resumed their advance towards Baghdad on 5 March. III Corps advancing along the left bank, arrived in front of Turkish defences across the River Diyala on 7 March. In the meantime, 7th Division of I Corps operating on the right bank, came in contact with the Turks holding the Tel Aswad line northwest of Shawa Khan. The position was too extended for the Turks to hold it in force, and they were occupying it in groups. The first of these extended from the river to Tel Aswad, while the second line was in some sand hills at Umm at Tubul, astride the railway line near Baghdad Railway Station.

On 9 March, the British tried to turn the Turkish right flank by a wide movement towards the northwest with two battalions of 28th Brigade, but the advance was checked 700 yards short of the Turkish line. At 1400 hours, 92nd and 28th Punjabis of 19th Brigade

were ordered to reinforce the two battalions on the left. The Punjabis, advancing under fire over open ground, suffered heavy casualties. By 1700 hours, they had reached the firing line but could make little headway in the face of stiff enemy resistance. The troops, suffering considerably from exhaustion and thirst, were ordered to dig in for the night.

By now, the Turks had realized that their outnumbered forces had little chance of defending Baghdad, and during the night, they evacuated the Tel Aswad line and fell back to Umm at Tubul. In the meantime, III Corps crossed the River Diyala. On 10 March, 7th Division again advanced with 19th and 21st Brigades in front, but its progress was hampered by a severe sandstorm. During the night, the Turks abandoned Baghdad and retreated towards Mushahida, eleven miles north of Baghdad. On 11 March, 7th Division entered Baghdad. It was the thirtieth time that the city had fallen to a conquering army. The 7th Division followed the Turks to Mushahida, where after a stiff action on 14 March, the Turkish XVIII Corps again retreated, falling back to Samarra, Baquba and Falluja. The 92nd Punjabis formed part of the divisional reserve and did not take part in the action.

The Battle of Jabal Hamrin:[39] While the British had been advancing from the south, the Russians had been pressing the Turks from north and east. In March 1917, the Turkish XIII Corps retreated towards Khaniqin from Kermanshah, pursued by a Russian force operating in Persia. This opened up the possibility of trapping the Turks between the two allied armies. On 16 March, General Keary was ordered to move from Baquba to Khaniqin with 8th and 9th Brigades and cut off the retreating Turks. But Keary's approach towards Khaniqin was blocked by Jabal Hamrin—a series of rugged hills about 600 feet high. The Turkish line of retreat towards Kirkuk lay across River Diyala, and to protect it, they were holding the crests of Jabal Hamrin in force.

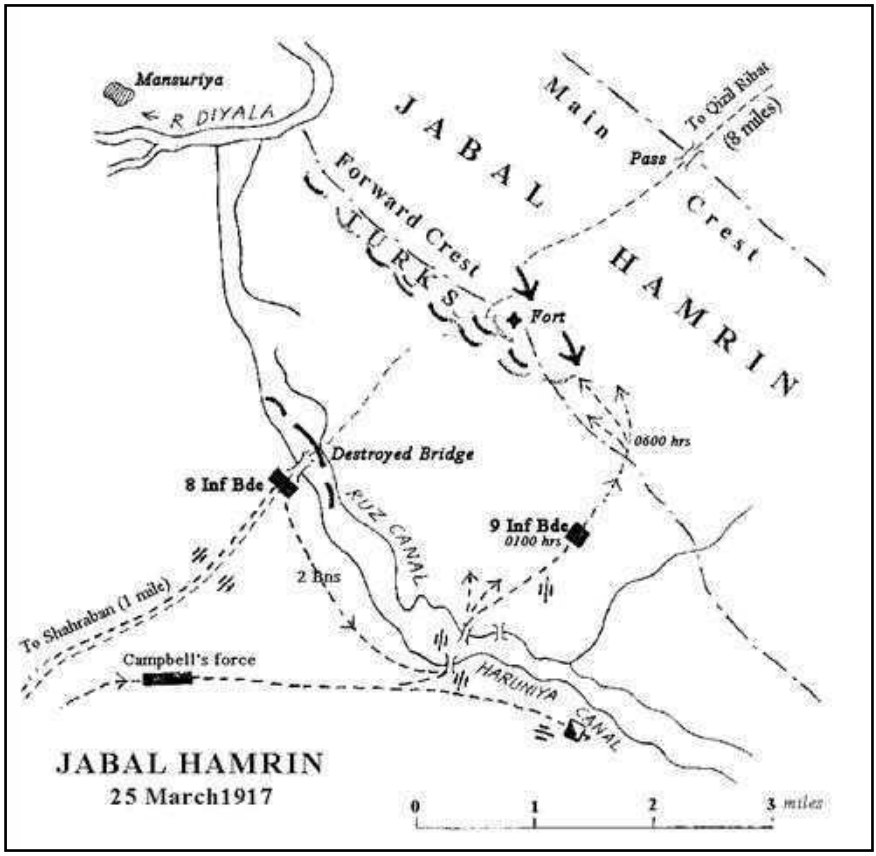


20. The Area around Baghdad, March 1917.

On 23 March, Keary's force occupied Shahraban, but the Turks in the meantime had been slipping across the Diyala. Maude ordered Keary to prevent this by "vigorous" action. Faced with an entrenched enemy of unknown strength, the only option available to Keary was to try to turn the enemy's left flank and drive him off the Khaniqin road. The 9th Brigade under Brigadier General Campbell was ordered to carry out the flanking move during the night. The 8th Brigade was to join in the attack from the front once 9th Brigade's attack had developed. However, between the Turks and Keary's force lay two canals, which unknown to the British, were not fordable. Much time was lost in bridging these canals and the bridge over Ruz Canal in front of 8th Brigade was still not completed by 25 March. On 24 March, the Turks could be seen reinforcing their left flank. With all surprise lost and one brigade unavailable for attack, the chances of success were slim. Campbell conveyed as much to Keary, who protested to Army Headquarters but was overruled by Maude.

During the night of 24 March, 9th Brigade crossed the canals. In the meantime, Keary ordered two battalions of 8th Brigade to move in the rear of Campbell's force. After reaching the foothills of Jabal Hamrin unhindered, 9th Brigade resumed its advance at dawn in a diamond formation, with the 2nd Dorsetshire Regiment leading, 1/1st Gurkha Rifles on the left, 105th Mahrattas on the right, and 93rd Burma Infantry in the rear. "In a short time the brigade was swallowed up in hills. At first little opposition was met with; but gradually the enemy's resistance began to stiffen, until finally the brigade was firmly wedged into the hills, and surrounded on all sides …"[40]

As soon as they crossed the forward crest, the battalions came under intense fire from concealed Turkish positions. The artillery guns following the brigade could not bring up effective fire, as the gunners could not distinguish friend from foe. Then a



21. The Battle of Jabal Hamrin, 25 March 1917.

Turkish counterattack forced the Dorsets to fall back. It was followed by a series of counterattacks, which pushed the British frontline back. A company of 93rd Burma Infantry moved in to support the Gurkhas' right, but by 1430 hours, the situation had become so precarious that General Campbell ordered the brigade to withdraw. The remaining three companies of 93rd Burma Infantry and the two battalions of 8th Brigade were ordered to cover the retirement.

Once the rest of the brigade had withdrawn, the rearguard, which was closely engaged with the Turks, started its own

retirement. "Now commenced one of the most unpleasant experiences imaginable … that of retiring across a level plain, by day, with rifles, machine guns, and shrapnel, lacing into our backs. The pace was that of the slowest man, that is, the wounded, and it is a wonder how anyone came through unscathed".[41] The brigade suffered heavy casualties. Five officers of 93rd Burma Infantry were wounded including Major Haughton the CO. Lieutenant JB Pearson, who was last seen giving water to a wounded sepoy in the hills, was not heard or seen again. The battalion Subedar Major Madat Khan, was killed along with two Indian officers, while four more were wounded. Those wounded who could not be evacuated, were left behind, never to be seen alive again. Many heroic deeds were performed; "but as awards are not given to defeated troops, not a single decoration was received by 9th Brigade".[42] Throughout the day, General Keary had been subjected to a barrage of messages and orders from General Maude, who had a tendency to micromanage operations and to interfere in his subordinates' command. The operation, pushed through on his insistence over the objections of his field commanders, was a costly disaster: Campbell's force suffered 1165 casualties—153 of them in 93rd Burma Infantry.

The Russians finally arrived at Qizil Rabat, linking up with the British on 2 April, but the Turkish XIII Corps had by then slipped away unmolested across the Diyala, covered by Turkish troops on Jabal Hamrin. In the meantime, the 91st Punjabis with 7th Brigade were ordered to the Euphrates Front to capture Falluja. The 7th Brigade entered the city on 19 March and occupied it without any opposition.

The Action of Istabulat:[43] With the Russians firmly established on the line of Diyala, offensive operations against the Turks were resumed. By the middle of April 1917, Turkish resistance on the left bank of the Tigris was broken and Maude turned his attention to the right bank. The Turks had taken up a strong defensive

position at Istabulat, south of Samarra. Their line extended southwards from the Tigris across Dujail Canal and the railway line towards Istabulat Railway Station, turning at right angles from a point about one mile west of the station. Dujail Canal was about 25 feet wide and six feet deep; its high banks offering an excellent defensive position. Two strongpoints protected the Turkish left flank. Facing them across two and a half miles of open and flat ground, the British frontline extended from Jibbara mounds to Al Mustabba.

The British plan of attack on 21 April, was to assault the left flank of the enemy with 21st Brigade and seize the bridges on Dujail Canal; followed immediately by an attack south of the canal by 19th Brigade. Early on the morning of 21 April, 21st Brigade attacked the Turkish left and secured its objectives. At 0600 hours, the 92nd Punjabis began their advance under the cover of artillery, and driving back Turkish advanced troops, captured Istabulat Station at 0645 hours. The battalion then resumed its advance but on coming under heavy fire, dug in about 600 yards short of the enemy's frontline. With 92nd Punjabis covering its left flank, the rest of the brigade then assaulted and captured the Turkish frontline. At 1640 hours, the Turks launched a determined counterattack against 92nd Punjabis but were repulsed. The battalion suffered 44 casualties during the day's action.

On 22 April, the Turks started withdrawing from their positions and 19th Brigade was ordered to pursue them. By 0900 hours, the brigade had advanced up to Hill 200, where they halted to allow 28th Brigade to pass through them. The Turks were now holding a position about two miles northwest of the Police Station. The 28th Brigade captured the position in late afternoon and pursued the fleeing Turks, only to be pushed back to the captured trenches by a strong Turkish counterattack. The situation was only saved by the timely arrival of 19th Brigade. As the two

brigades consolidated their positions during the night, the Turks abandoned Samarra and withdrew towards Tikrit in the north.

The Turkish Sixth Army was now a shattered force of barely 30,000 men. It was defending a front of 250 miles, extending from Ramadi on the Euphrates to the Persian frontier. Facing it was an ever-expanding British Army of more than 300,000 men. With another large British Army assembling in Egypt, the fate of the Turks was all but sealed. As the hot weather approached, the British called a halt in their operations to rest the troops and consolidate their gains. However, there was no rest for 93rd Burma Infantry, who had to endure several long marches on column duty over the desolate country between the Tigris and the Euphrates in the intense Mesopotamian heat. The other 8th Punjabi battalions had an easier time, spending the early summer mostly in training.

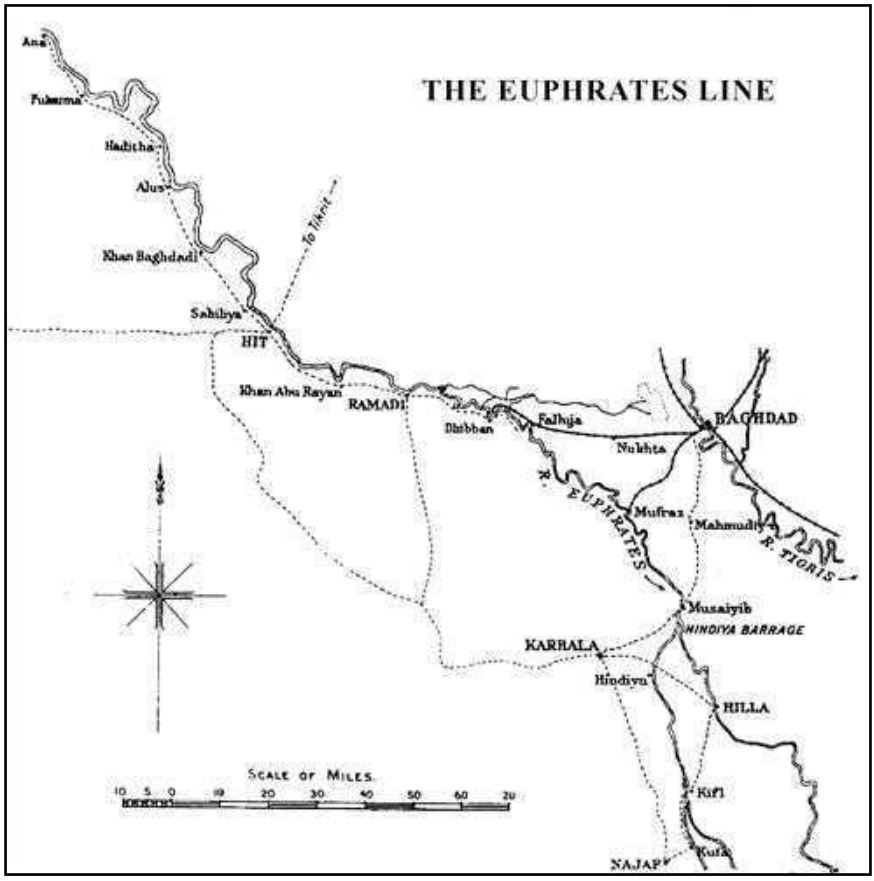
The summer months also saw some major changes among the personnel of the battalions. In May, Colonel TR Maclachlan was appointed Commander of 37th Brigade and Major TJ Ponting took over the command of 92nd Punjabis. In June, Lieutenant Colonel Haughton, the Commanding Officer of 93rd Burma Infantry was invalided out to India due to the wound received at Jabal Hamrin. Major Morgan, who had commanded the battalion at Beit Isa, Apex, Khudaira and Jabal Hamrin, was expected to take over, but to everyone's disappointment, Major Bredin of 72nd Punjabis was appointed to the command. In August, the ever-cheerful General LWY Campbell (89th Punjabis), who had commanded 9th Brigade during the toughest part of the campaign, relinquished his command. His departure was keenly felt by all. Soon after, General HDU Keary (91st Punjabis), who had so ably led 3rd Division since 1915, also left to take over another command in India.[44]

Since the outbreak of the war, the Indian Army had been rapidly expanding. Several of the single-battalion regiments raised

second, and in some cases, third battalions. On 5 June 1917, the 2nd Battalion 89th Punjabis or 2/89th Punjabis (10/8th Punjab) was raised at Ferozepur by Lieutenant Colonel AV Alexander. A draft of one British and two Indian officers, and 170 ORs was provided by 89th Punjabis, which was re-designated as 1st Battalion 89th Punjabis or 1/89th Punjabis.[45] On 20 July 1918, 2/90th Punjabis was raised at Dhond. The battalion served in the Third Afghan War before disbandment in 1922. The 2/91st Punjabis (Light Infantry) was raised at Ferozepur on 26 February 1918 and served in Egypt after the war. It was disbanded in 1921.[46]

The Battles of Ramadi:[47] General Maude had been contemplating a move against the Turks on the Euphrates Front since March 1917. In July, he decided to attack the Turkish garrison at Ramadi despite the intense heat. The task was given to 7th Brigade, which had been deployed on the Euphrates since March, protecting the left flank of I Corps. The 93rd Burma Infantry at Baghdad was ordered on 6 July to join 7th Brigade for the operations. The battalion marched out the same evening, arriving at Falluja early on 8 July. During the march, the battalion had a very tough time due to the terrible heat but only two men fell out.[48]

On 10 July, the 91st Punjabis moved out from Bustan to join the brigade at Sinn al Zibban. On the same day, two companies of 93rd Burma Infantry occupied Madhij, driving out the small Turkish garrison there. Leaving 93rd Burma Infantry to garrison Sinn al Zibban and Madhij, 7th Brigade concentrated north of Mushaid Ridge at 0445 hours on 11 July. Half an hour later, three companies of 91st Punjabis with four armoured cars moved out towards the enemy positions but were soon checked by Turkish fire from the banks of the Habbaniya Canal. 2/7th Gurkha Rifles were despatched to cover the left flank of 91st Punjabis and to continue the attack from there. At 0630 hours, the Turks evacuated the canal banks, and the two battalions crossed the canal under heavy fire.



22. The Euphrates Line.

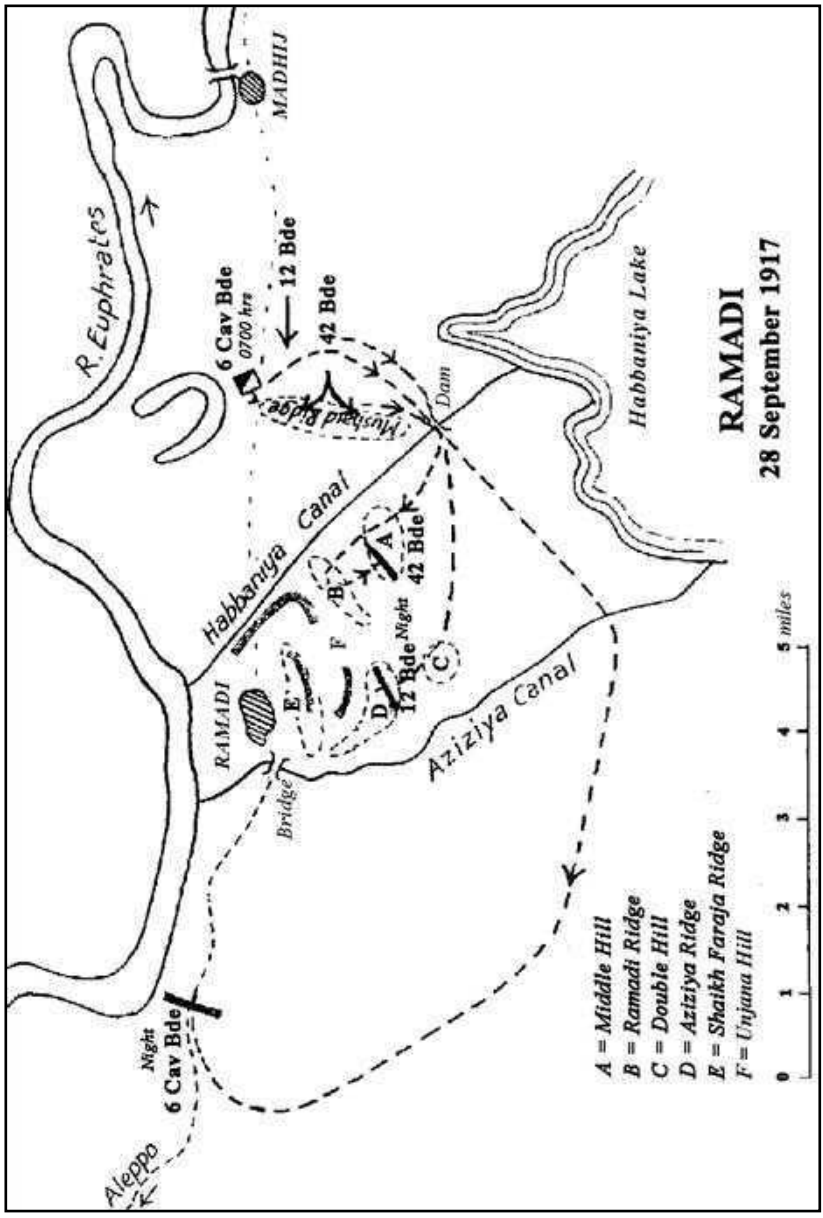
At 0800 hours, a severe dust storm started blowing, which made all observation impossible. The assault was delayed and at 0920 hours, the Brigade Commander decided that it was not possible to continue the attack in the intense heat of the day. But the troops could not be pulled back because of enemy fire, and they were ordered to stay where they were. The troops stayed out in the open all day, suffering both from enemy fire as well as the terrible heat. The casualties of 91st Punjabis during the day were 35 ORs killed and 52 wounded including two Indian officers. The troops were in no condition to resume the attack and early next

morning, they were pulled back. Concluding that it was not possible to attain his objectives in the intense heat with the force at his disposal, the Brigade Commander withdrew his force to Falluja. The 93rd Burma Infantry covered the withdrawal, suffering a few casualties due to sniping by hostile Arab tribesmen. A few days later, the battalion rejoined its brigade in Baghdad, while 91st Punjabis returned to Bustan.

As the weather improved in September, the advance on Ramadi was resumed. This time, the task was entrusted to Major General HT Brooking, Commander of 15th Division. Since the last attack on Ramadi, the Turks had reinforced the garrison and chances of surprising them were minimal. Brooking therefore decided to deceive the enemy as to the exact point of attack. He planned a wide flanking movement against the Turkish southern flank, where attack was least expected. At the same time, elaborate deceptive measures were taken to convince the Turks that the strike would come along the river against their left. It was a bold plan, and in the end, it was well-executed.

The Turkish positions southeast of Ramadi were located on several low-lying ridges between the Habbaniya and Aziziya Canals. Their left rested on the Euphrates while their right flank was protected by the Habbaniya Lake. A small force also held Mushaid Ridge east of Habbaniya Canal. Facing them was a British force composed of the 12th and 42nd Infantry, and 6th Cavalry Brigades. The 12th Brigade with 90th Punjabis had arrived at Falluja from Baghdad after marching across the desert in extremely trying conditions. By 26 September, the strike force had assembled at Madhij, with 90th Punjabis forming part of an outpost line covering the concentration of the force.

At 2145 hours on 27 September, the force began its advance and soon captured the crossing over Habbaniya Canal at the dam. Early on the morning of 28 September, Mushaid Ridge was also seized. Screened by Mushaid Ridge, the force then turned



23. The Second Battle of Ramadi, 28 September 1917.

sharply to the southwest and crossed the dam. While the Cavalry Brigade advanced towards Aziziya Canal to occupy a position in the rear of the Turks and cut off their retreat (map 23), the 42nd Brigade attacked and captured Middle and Double Hills. Around noon, 42nd Brigade was ordered to capture Ramadi Ridge, while 12th Brigade was to seize Aziziya Ridge. The 90th Punjabis and 2/39th Garhwal Rifles advanced towards Aziziya Ridge at 1530 hours and captured its southern portion. However, the 42nd Brigade on coming under intense fire, was ordered to fall back to Middle Hill.

Meanwhile the cavalry, which had arrived in the rear of the Turks, was ordered to seize the bridge over Aziziya Canal, but for some unknown reason failed to do so. The task was now given to 12th Brigade, which was to continue the attack eastwards after capturing the bridge on Aziziya Canal in the morning. Although there was no fighting during the night, the 90th Punjabis were much distressed due to lack of water. At 0635 hours on 29 September, the 90th Punjabis advanced with the Garhwalis on their left and two companies of 1/5th Queen's Regiment in support. Soon after 0700 hours, the 90th Punjabis captured Shaikh Faraja Ridge but suffered heavy casualties in the process.

During the attack, two platoons of C Company lost direction, and moving too far to the right, came up against the Turkish position on Unjana Hill. The Punjabis attacked and captured the position but were then pushed back by a heavy Turkish counterattack. Subedar Imam Din, who was wounded, and eight sepoys were captured by the Turks. The subedar was taken before the Turkish commander and so impressed him with accounts of the force arrayed against the Turks, that the officer, already demoralized by the way the battle was going, decided to surrender. Subedar Imam Din disarmed the Turks and leaving his men on guard, rode out towards British lines on the Turkish commander's horse to arrange for the surrender. After stopping the

British artillery's fire, the subedar then rode back to the Turkish lines and returned leading a column of 68 Turkish officers, 1150 ORs and five guns. For his actions, the intrepid officer was awarded the Order of British India, 2nd Class.[49]

In the meantime, the Garhwalis and the Queen's along with elements of 90th Punjabis had captured the Turkish trenches on the northern end of Aziziya Ridge. Captain AP Rodgerson of 2/39th Garhwal Rifles taking a mixed force of the three battalions charged and captured the bridge over Aziziya Canal along with a battery of guns. By 0915 hours, the Turks started surrendering all along the front. The Second Battle of Ramadi resulted in complete destruction of the Turkish Euphrates Group and opened up the river to the British. The British killed or captured almost 3600 Turks besides seizing a large amount of war materiel. Their own losses amounted to about a thousand men killed. The 90th Punjabis suffered 182 casualties including three British and seven Indian officers wounded, and 32 ORs killed or missing with 140 wounded.[50]

The Actions of Daur and Tikrit:[51] Operations on the Tigris Front were resumed in October 1917. The left bank of River Diyala was cleared of the Turks and Jabal Hamrin was occupied. To ease pressure on their comrades on the Diyala, the Turkish XVIII Corps advanced from Tikrit, but hastily withdrew at the first sign of British counter-offensive. However, a division was left at Daur, twelve miles south of Tikrit. General Maude ordered General Cobbe, the I Corps Commander, to neutralize this isolated force before it could be supported. The force put at Cobbe's disposal consisted of 7th Division, 8th Brigade and the Cavalry Division, with 9th Brigade in reserve at Samarra.

On 2 November, the 28th Brigade attacked and captured the Turkish position at Daur. The Cavalry Division had been assigned the role of cutting off the enemy's retreat in order to destroy him. But the cavalry withdrew as soon as it came under fire, allowing

the Turks to withdraw to Tikrit. Next day, the 19th Brigade, which had been in support at Daur, was ordered to occupy Auja, south of Tikrit. At 1000 hours, the 92nd Punjabis occupied Auja Nullah but came under fire from Turkish positions in front of Tikrit and suffered fifteen casualties.

General Cobbe now received orders to assault Tikrit and destroy the Turkish stores there. The Turkish positions in front of the town were held in strength and consisted of a maze of trenches almost six miles long. The line started from the river and continued westwards for a mile before bending northwest. General Cobbe planned to attack the enemy's centre-left with 8th Brigade supported by 19th Brigade. The 19th Brigade was to exploit any success gained by the leading brigade. The 9th and 28th Brigades were held in reserve, while 21st Brigade was to cooperate from the opposite side of the river. Having lost all confidence in the cavalry, Cobbe ordered them simply to guard the left flank of the force.

By 0530 hours on 5 November, the attacking force was in position. The 92nd Punjabis were in the second line of their brigade, behind 28th Punjabis. The attack was delayed until 1130 hours, while artillery preparation was completed. The 8th Brigade then charged and captured the Turkish first line trenches. However, as they moved against the second line, Turkish resistance stiffened and they suffered heavy casualties. The 19th Brigade then moved in, with 28th Punjabis on the right of 8th Brigade and Seaforth Highlanders on the left. At 1340 hours, 92nd Punjabis joined the fighting in support of 28th Punjabis, whose attack was held up. During the afternoon, 28th Punjabis were withdrawn and their place in the front was taken by 92nd Punjabis. Heavy fighting continued till evening, when the Turks started withdrawing. During the night, patrols were sent out to check the enemy's disposition, and a patrol of 92nd Punjabis captured five prisoners. In the morning, it became clear that the Turks had retreated from Tikrit towards Fat-ha in the north. Having captured the Turkish stores at Tikrit, the British

returned to Samarra. During the day's action, the 92nd Punjabis suffered 67 casualties, mostly wounded.[52]

On 18 November, General Maude died of cholera. With the remnants of the Turkish Army being pushed back on all fronts, his job was almost finished. In December, Khaniqin was occupied and on 7 May 1918, Kirkuk was captured. On 26 March, the Turkish second line on the Euphrates at Khan Baghdadi was smashed with more than 2000 Turks taken prisoner. The 90th Punjabis were present at the Battle of Khan Baghdadi as part of the Reserve Group but were not engaged in active fighting. With the approach of hot weather, major operations were again halted in Mesopotamia. The focus now shifted to Palestine, where the British were planning a major offensive in autumn.

In December 1917, 1/89th Punjabis returned to Mesopotamia and was posted to 53rd Brigade of the newly raised 18th Division. From February 1918, the battalion was employed on internal security duties at Kufa and Nejef. One of its platoons was detailed to guard the residence of Captain WM Marshall, the Assistant Political Officer in Nejef. On 19 March, Captain Marshall and a sepoy of 1/89th Punjabis were murdered by miscreants. A platoon of 1/89th Punjabis under Captain JS Hannah was moved to reinforce the troops guarding the residence. In the meantime, Lieutenant Colonel NM Geoghegan, Commandant 1/89th Punjabis, decided to blockade the city and cut its water supply. Harsh punitive terms were laid down for lifting of the blockade. By 6 May, the resistance of the city was broken and the city elders agreed to meet all British demands including handing over the men accused of murdering Captain Marshall. Captain Hannah received the Military Cross for defending the Political Officer's residence during the blockade.[53]

With armistice imminent following the destruction of Turkish armies in Palestine in September, the British again went on the offensive. Their objective was to capture Mosul with its oil

fields before the end of hostilities. On 30 October, just a day before the armistice, the Turkish commander in Mesopotamia surrendered and the next day, the British occupied Mosul. By now, the British had more than 400,000 troops in the Mesopotamian Theatre; three quarters of them Indians. The Indians had also suffered the bulk of nearly 100,000 British casualties of the campaign. Strategically, the campaign was quite unnecessary and certainly not worth the cost paid for it—a cost that is still being counted.

7
Palestine

Enver Pasha, the Turkish Generalissimo, had frittered away his best armies against the Russians in the Caucasus, and by 1917, the Turks were under severe pressure on all fronts. With the campaign going well in Mesopotamia, the British felt that the time had come to open another front. In December 1916, they advanced from Egypt and took Rafah near the Palestinian frontier. In 1917, the British Prime Minister asked for Jerusalem as a Christmas gift and General Allenby, the British commander in Egypt, duly obliged. The Allied powers were determined to dismember the Ottoman Empire and with Turkey threatened from north and east, the time had come to strike the final blow from the south. The aim was nothing short of complete destruction of the Turkish armies. However, the German spring offensive of 1918 forced the British to withdraw more than 50,000 British troops from Egypt for the Western Front. Their place was taken by troops from the Indian Army.

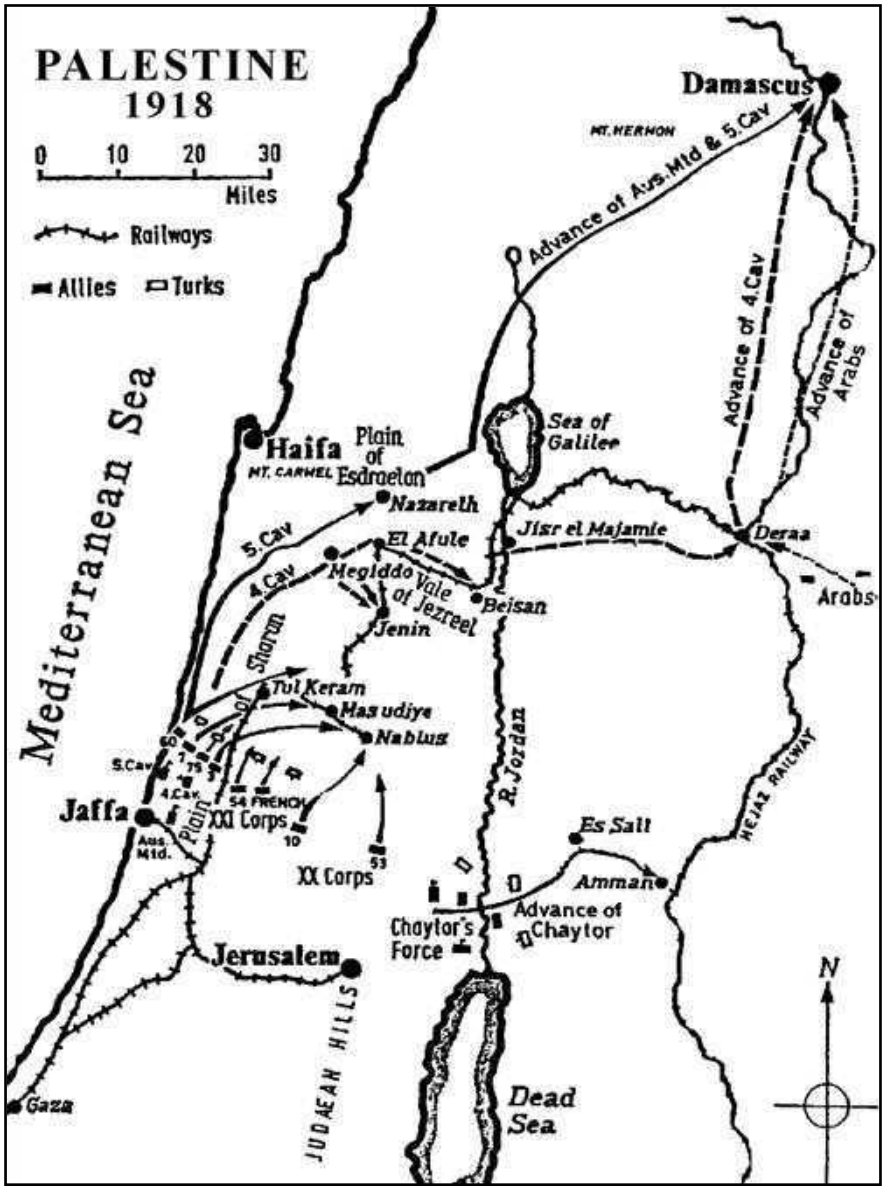
In December 1917, the 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab) moved to Egypt with 7th (Meerut) Division and by April 1918, they were in the frontlines in Palestine. A month later, they were joined by the 91st Punjabis and 93rd Burma Infantry ((3/8th & 5/8th Punjab), who arrived with 3rd (Lahore) Division. By September, General Allenby was ready to launch his offensive in Palestine. He had at his disposal seven infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, distributed into XX, XXI and the Desert Mounted Corps: 95,000 rifles and 20,000 sabres, besides 500 guns. The bulk of his forces—three-fourths of the infantry and nearly half the cavalry—belonged to the Indian Army. Facing them were three Turkish 'armies' with less than 50,000 infantry, 1500 cavalry and some 300 guns.[1] The British also enjoyed complete superiority in the air.

The Turks had a long and vulnerable line of communication based on the Hejaz Railway running south from Damascus. This was under constant threat from the Arab army of Emir Feisal of Hejaz and the Royal Air Force. Needless to say, morale of the Turks was very low.

The Battle of Megiddo: In September 1918, the British frontline extended from the Mediterranean Sea north of Jaffa to the River Jordan north of Jerusalem. After taking deceptive measures to mislead the Turks into believing that he intended to strike in the eastern sector of the front, Allenby secretly concentrated his forces in the west. His plan was to strike along the coastal Plain of Sharon with five infantry divisions. The infantry, after overrunning the Turkish defences, would then wheel inwards, thus "opening the gate" for the three cavalry divisions massed behind them. While the infantry protected their flank, the cavalry would dash north towards the Plain of Esdraelon, and then push east towards the Jordan, thus bagging the entire Turkish Army. In the meantime, the Arabs would strike at Deraa, cutting the Turkish line of communication, while the air force would bomb and disrupt Turkish command and communication centres. It was "a plan of genius"; and in the end, it was brilliantly executed.

By 18 September, Allenby had completed the deployment of his troops on the coastal plain. XXI Corps under Lieutenant General Bulfin was the main attacking force. From left to right, it was made up of the 60th, 7th, 75th, 3rd and 54th Infantry Divisions. The cavalry divisions were massed behind 60th and 7th Divisions, while 383 guns were in support. Facing them were some 8000 Turks with 130 guns. On Bulfin's right, the frontline up to the River Jordan was held by XX Corps, while General Chaytor's Desert Mounted Corps in the Jordan Valley was protecting the right flank of the British Army.

At 0430 hours on 19 September, the artillery opened up a tremendous bombardment of Turkish positions and the infantry



24. The Battle of Megiddo, 19-21 September 1918.

rushed forward. On their arrival at the Turkish frontline, the guns lifted and the infantry then advanced under a creeping barrage, moving at a rate of 100 yards a minute. The Turks were stunned by the intensity of the bombardment, and the infantry quickly overwhelmed them. After breaking through the Turkish line, XXI Corps then wheeled to the right, and advanced to secure the Tul Karam-Nablus Road in order to screen the right flank of the cavalry. The cavalry rushed through the opened passage towards the passes in the Carmel Range.

The objective given to 7th Division was the western portion of the Et Tireh defences. The advance of the division was led by 19th Brigade on the right and 21st Brigade on the left. The leading waves of 92nd Punjabis swarmed into Turkish trenches at 0445 hours, after tearing their way through the enemy's wire with cutters or their bare hands and feet. Dozens of Turkish soldiers were killed or captured. Naik Dalip Singh and his section charged a machine gun, killing its crew and capturing the gun. Leaving parties to mop up the remaining Turks, the battalion continued its rapid advance, the leading troops having to halt several times as they outpaced their own artillery barrage.[2]

At 0500 hours, the battalion's right flank came under heavy fire from a Turkish position on a hill. Subedar Khan Zaman immediately attacked the position with his platoon while despatching Havildar Ashraf Khan with two sections to work round the hill and attack the enemy's flank. Showing great dash, Ashraf Khan and his men advanced up the hill under heavy enfilade fire. On reaching the crest, they charged and captured the position, taking several prisoners. During the advance, the NCO was seriously wounded. For their gallantry, Subedar Khan Zaman and Havildar Ashraf Khan received the IOM.[3]

At 0700 hours, Naik Buta Khan of 92nd Punjabis and four wounded men of 1st Guides Infantry captured a Turkish 150 mm howitzer battery. The men had been wounded in action, and after

getting first aid, were going back to the frontline, when moving too far to the right, they suddenly came up against the Turkish battery in a nullah. At the time, teams of horses and bullocks were moving up to hook in with the guns. Without hesitation, the gallant NCO put his men between the animals and the guns and then attracted the attention of A Company moving forward on his left.[4] Naik Buta Khan was awarded the IOM for his gallantry and initiative.[5]

Having overrun the Turkish trenches by 0900 hours, the 92nd Punjabis concentrated with the rest of the brigade for the next phase of operations. The battalion had suffered 49 casualties, including one Indian officer and six ORs killed.[6] At 1300 hours, 7th Division advanced towards Et Tireh, moving into the hilly country towards the east of the coastal plain. The advance was led by 92nd Punjabis, who after passing through the northern outskirts of Et Tireh at 1400 hours, were ordered to occupy a hill west of El Majdal. As the battalion advanced, it faced considerable resistance from the Turkish rearguard, which was occupying both sides of Wadi al Ayun. By 1800 hours, the Turks were driven from their positions and El Majdal was occupied. The battalion's casualties during the second phase of the operations were eight men killed, including a British and an Indian officer, and 58 wounded. At 2130 hours, the battalion moved into bivouac. The men were utterly exhausted after more than twelve hours of almost continuous action.[7]

The task given to 3rd Division on 19 September, was to break through the Turkish defences in front of the village of Sabieh, and then turning eastwards, capture the Turkish positions between Jaljulye and Qalqilye. From there, the division was to continue its advance towards Azzun and Jiyus in the Judean foothills. The advance of the division was led by 7th Brigade on the right and 9th Brigade on the left. The attack of 7th Brigade was carried out rapidly, with 91st Punjabis advancing in the second wave. The Turkish trenches were quickly overrun, and by

0900 hours, the brigade had captured Qalqilye. In the afternoon, the 91st Punjabis moved to the front of the brigade and continued the advance over broken and difficult terrain well into the night. Early on the morning of 20 September, they captured Azzun, the headquarters of the German Asia Corps, after overcoming some stiff resistance.[8]

The 9th Brigade also advanced rapidly without encountering any serious resistance. The only difficulty it faced was due to the thick cloud of smoke, which obscured everything. Between 0500 and 0530 hours on 19 September, 93rd Burma Infantry passed through the leading battalions, and after overrunning the Turkish second line, wheeled eastwards. The advance was led by Captain WCS Haycraft and Lieutenant PJW McClenaghan, commanding B and D Companies respectively. Both officers received the Military Cross for leading the gallant charge of their companies. Subedar Harnam Singh also greatly distinguished himself by capturing several enemy machine gun posts and charging a Turkish position on the battalion's left flank containing about fifty Turks. For his gallantry, he was awarded the Military Cross. The advance now slowed down, as the brigade faced some resistance from German troops of the Asia Corps. However, by nightfall, the brigade had reached its objective of Jiyus, which was captured by A and C Companies of 93rd Burma Infantry and 105th Mahratta Light Infantry.[9]

The day's operations had been a spectacular success for the British Army. XXI Corps had achieved all its objectives. Having rolled up the Turkish right flank, it was now advancing east and north. During the night, XX Corps had also begun its advance towards Nablus, which it captured on 21 September. Throughout the day, the air force had played havoc with the Turkish command and communication centres, while the Arabs had blown up the Hejaz railway at two points, cutting off the Turkish line of retreat. Meanwhile the cavalry, after riding all day and night, descended in

the Plain of Esdraelon and the Vale of Jezreel in the Turks' rear. In less than 48 hours, the Turkish Army was virtually annihilated. By 21 September, all organized resistance had ended, and thousands of dazed Turks were captured.

The cavalry continued its rapid advance northwards, closely followed by the infantry. Haifa and Acre on the coast were captured on 23 September; Damascus fell on 1 October; and Aleppo was taken on 25 October. The 92nd Punjabis, advancing with 3rd Division, entered Haifa on 29 September, and then marching along the coast, arrived at Beirut ten days later. By 18 October, the battalion was in Tripoli. If the ride of the cavalry had been spectacular, then the march of the infantry was no less impressive. The endurance shown by the infantry was "striking … especially the astonishing marching-power of the Indian infantry battalions".[10]

With an Allied army approaching Constantinople from Salonika, the Turks finally gave in and sued for peace. The armistice came into force on 31 October, bringing to an end Allenby's brilliant campaign. Compared to the conduct of war so far, the war of mobility fought in Palestine was nothing short of breathtaking; a foretaste of things to come. The campaign is also memorable as the last hurrah for the mounted arm, before it was made redundant by the tank. The cavalry, which had performed so dismally in Mesopotamia, now had a chance to redeem itself. And it did—the 5th Cavalry Division riding 550 miles in 38 days—an extraordinary feat by any standard.

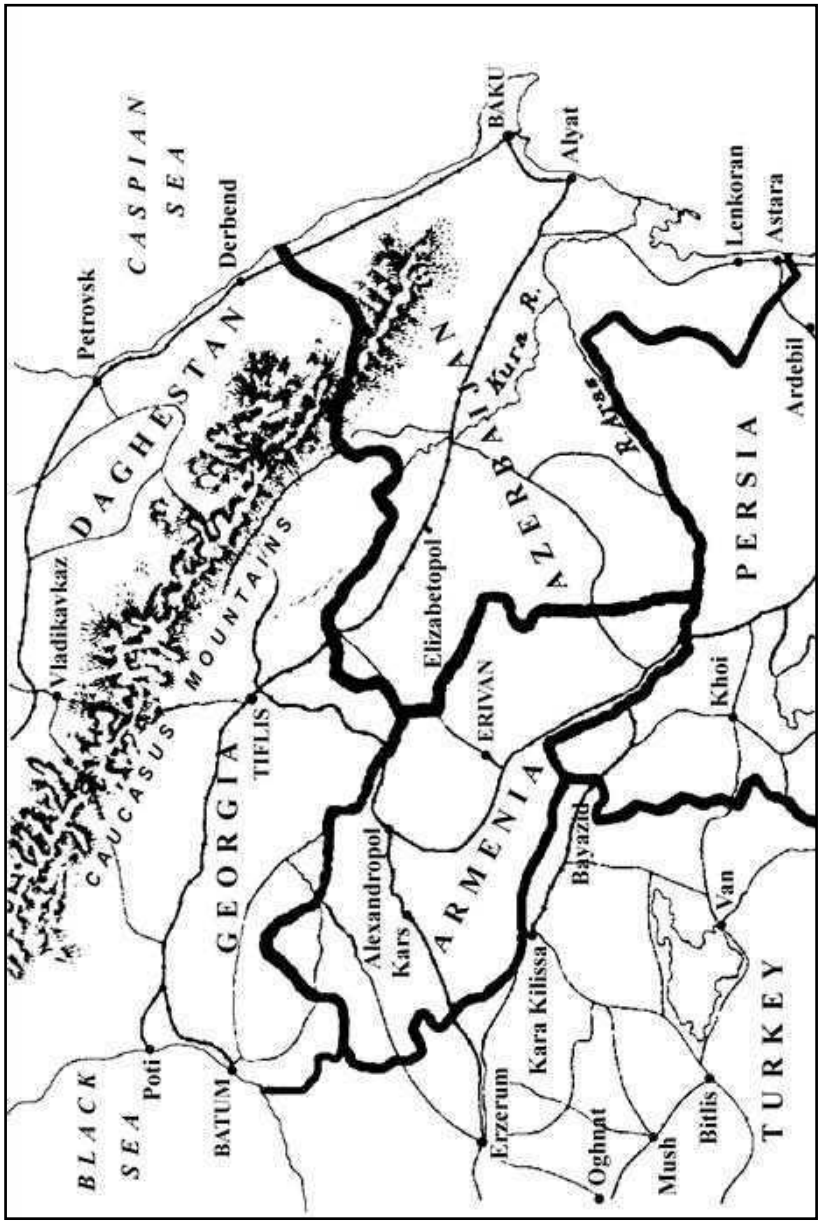
During the campaign, the British captured more than 71,000 Turks and 3700 Germans, besides huge quantities of war materiel. The total British casualties amounted to 5666.[11] The 91st Punjabis suffered 59 casualties;[12] 92nd Punjabis 125;[13] and 93rd Burma Infantry 87. On 27 October, 93rd Burma Infantry left Tul Karam for Damascus, arriving there on 13 November, having marched 171 miles in thirteen days. The battalion stayed in Syria

for the next year and a half, leaving for India in April 1920.[14] The 91st Punjabis stayed in Palestine till May 1920, when they too left for home.[15] In February 1919, the 92nd Punjabis embarked at Beirut for Cilicia in Turkey to assist the French troops occupying Turkish territory. The battalion stayed at Bozanti and Tchifta Khan, returning to Egypt in November. It finally sailed for India in May 1920.[16]

Salonika and Trans-Caucasia 1918-20

In October 1918, 1/89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab) left Mesopotamia for Salonika, arriving there on 4 November, four days after the armistice. The troops took the news in their stride, "the Subedar Major asking if the men had permission to cheer!"[17] However, the battalion was not allowed to enjoy the peace for long and was ordered to move to Batum in the Trans-Caucasian Republic of Georgia. Since the Revolution of 1917, Russia had been in a state of anarchy, with civil war raging between the Bolsheviks and the royalist White Russians. Taking advantage of the absence of central authority, the Trans-Caucasian regions of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence. However, the mutually hostile states were very unstable, and the entire region was in a very disturbed state. The British, who were actively supporting the anti-Bolshevik forces, were especially concerned about the oilfields near Baku. In December 1918, a British Mission with 27th Division was despatched to Georgia to stabilize the region.

The 1/89th Punjabis sailed for Batum on 28 December, as part of the 81st Brigade. On arrival in Georgia, the battalion was deployed in seventeen detachments on bridges and tunnels, with the Battalion Headquarters and a reserve company based at Mikhailovo. The attitude of the Georgians was quite hostile and



25. The Caucasus 1918-20.

the battalion suffered a few casualties due to shooting incidents. In April 1919, the battalion was detailed to provide guards on supply trains running in the region. Its area of responsibility included the line from Batum to Baku and from Tiflis to Kars and Erivan. Travelling in pairs, six to eight men were detailed on each train. In June, the battalion was again deployed on garrison duties. With the defeat of the White Russian Army, the British Mission withdrew to Batum in September 1919. In July 1920, the British evacuated Batum and on 9 July, 1/89th Punjabis sailed for Constantinople. After a few weeks in Turkey, the battalion left for India, arriving there in November.[18] The battalion was the last of the 8th Punjabis to reach home. It had seen almost six years of active service, suffered more than a thousand casualties and won numerous gallantry awards including the Victoria Cross. The 1/89th Punjabis also had the unique distinction of serving in more theatres of war than any other unit of the British Empire.

8
Birth of a Regiment

The Great War was a watershed event. Besides the social and political changes that followed in its wake, the war generated a technological and industrial revolution that profoundly changed the world. India, which had provided more than a million soldiers and much war materiel, could no longer be kept in backward isolation. She had experienced substantial industrial and economic growth, and her people were becoming politically aware. But for the Indians, it was the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre at Amritsar on 13 April 1919 that proved to be the turning point. The massacre, and the events that followed it, brought into sharp focus the obscene reality of British rule in India, and greatly spurred Indian Nationalism. The Indian demand for greater political representation soon became an inexorable movement for full independence. Armed with the novel tactics of 'non-violent resistance'—with an uncanny tendency to turn violent—Gandhi unleashed a mass movement that led to the end of British rule within thirty years. But it was not only the British, who were bewildered by the methods of Gandhi and his Indian National Congress. As 'Indian' Nationalism was unmasked as nothing more than 'Hindu' Nationalism, the Muslims of India became increasingly alarmed.

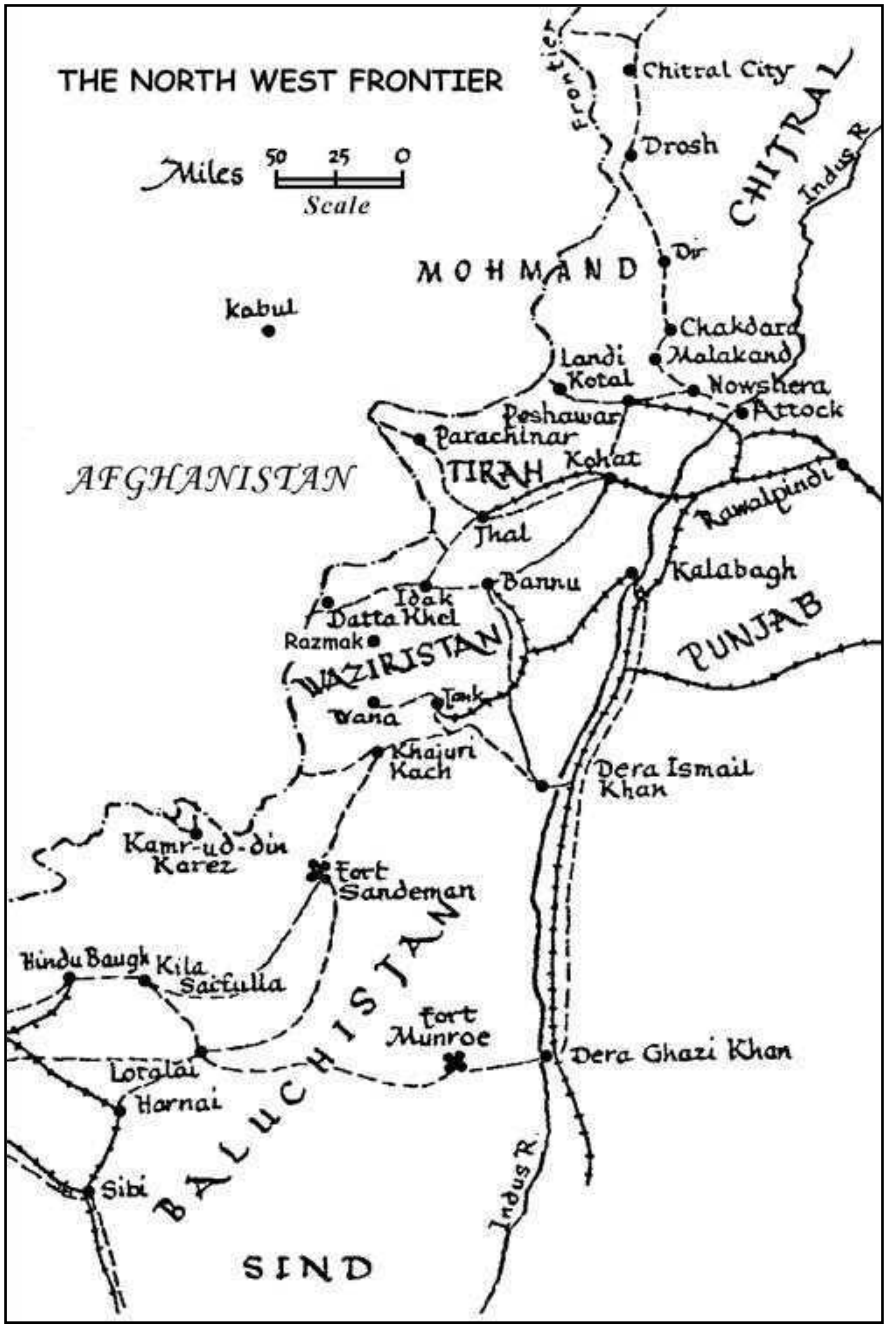
However, the Indian Army appears to have remained oblivious to the changes sweeping across India. If the war and the political events had any impact on Indian ranks, there were no outward signs of it. Even the increasing use of the Army to quell civil disturbances "in aid of civil power" did not shake its loyalty, and it went about its business as usual. The Army had proved its worth in the greatest test of arms in human history, and it was expected that major changes would be brought about in its

organization, training and equipment. However, all reforms were shelved, and the Army was left to its traditional role of securing the Northwest Frontier. The only significant change was the introduction of the modern regimental system, which gave birth to 8th Punjab Regiment. The period between the two World Wars saw the Regiment almost continuously employed on the Frontier. This provided an opportunity for the Regiment to develop its identity and foster *esprit de corps,* which would serve it well in the next World War.

Third Afghan War 1919

Since the end of the Great Game in 1905, the British had not been much taxed on their Northwest Frontier. But as always, the Frontier had a way of taking centre stage when least expected. Turco-German efforts to subvert Afghan neutrality and foment trouble on the Frontier had largely failed. However, throughout the First World War, the situation on the Frontier had remained tense. In February 1919, King Amanullah Khan ascended the Afghan throne after the murder of his father King Habibullah Khan and immediately embarked on a plan to attack India. Although the exact motives of the Afghan king are not known, he probably wanted to divert attention from persistent rumours about his involvement in the murder of his father. While the very idea of an Afghan invasion sounds absurd, it might have had certain merits at the time. With the British and Indian Armies mostly deployed overseas, and with civil unrest brewing in Punjab, Amanullah Khan probably thought that even limited gains would help raise his prestige and divert attention from his domestic troubles.

The Afghan Army was 50,000 strong, but it was poorly trained, equipped and led. The Afghans intended to rely heavily on the formidable frontier tribesmen. On 4 May 1919, the Afghans occupied the village of Bagh near Khyber on the British side of the



26. The Northwest Frontier.

border. Two days later, the British declared war. British forces were organized into a 'North-West Frontier Force' and a 'Baluchistan Force,' with a Central Reserve under General Headquarters. By 17 May, the Afghans had been beaten back in the Khyber. But just as the British were contemplating a move on Jalalabad, news reached of an Afghan force moving towards Thal in the Kurram Valley. By now, the frontier tribesmen were becoming restless, and troops of Frontier Corps were beginning to desert.[1]

On 27 May, an Afghan force under General Nadir Khan (later King Nadir Shah) besieged the garrison of Thal. However, despite superiority in numbers and artillery, the Afghan general failed to take the fort. A relief force under Brigadier General Rex Dyer[2] was despatched on 31 May, and by 2 June, the Afghan Army was in headlong retreat. The next day, an armistice was signed, bringing an end to the hostilities. But it was only the beginning of the troubles for the British. By now, the whole of Waziristan had become disturbed, and the Wazirs and Mahsuds rose up in a general insurrection. It took the British considerable time and effort to bring the situation under control.

Three 8th Punjabi battalions took part in the operations during and after the short-lived Afghan adventure. The 2/89th Punjabis (10/8th Punjab) had joined 1st (Peshawar) Division from 16th Indian Division in October 1917, and the battalion was already in the theatre, when hostilities broke out. During the operations, it remained deployed on post duties at Chakdara and Dargai.[3] The 2/90th Punjabis was stationed at Dhond and moved to the Frontier with 62nd Mobile Brigade as part of reinforcements, arriving in the theatre on 26 June. The battalion operated around Bannu as part of Waziristan Force in punitive operations against the tribesmen.[4]

The 1/90th Punjabis (2/8th Punjab) returned from Mesopotamia to Kamptee in India in March 1919. The battalion

had scarcely settled down when it was re-mobilized on 8 May for the Northwest Frontier. After a month's training in mountain warfare at Rawalpindi, the battalion arrived at Thal on 7 July, with 63rd Mobile Brigade.[5] On 16 July, two platoons of the battalion joined a punitive expedition against the Wazirs, south of Biland Khel.[6] During the next fourteen months, the battalion remained deployed at Thal, Parachinar, Alizai and Dharsamand. In October, it suffered its first casualties, when four men of a watering piquet were killed in an ambush near Thal. In September 1920, the battalion left the Frontier for Calcutta.[7]

Iraqi Revolt 1920

At the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was carved up by the British and the French. Mesopotamia, now called Iraq, was taken over by the British. In May 1920, the Iraqis rose up against British occupation. As the revolt spread, reinforcements were called in from India. Among them was 2/89th Punjabis (10/8th Punjab), who arrived in Iraq on 26 August 1920, as part of 76th Brigade of 6th Indian Division. The battalion was deployed on the Kut al Amara-Baghdad Line of Communication, providing protection for the construction work on Baghdad-Kut railway line.[8] Over the next five months, more than 73,000 British and Indian troops were engaged in countering the insurgents. The revolt was brutally suppressed, with indiscriminate terror bombing of villages by the Royal Air Force and widespread use of chemical weapons against civilians.

Reorganization 1921-22

The First World War had exposed some glaring deficiencies in the Indian Army; the most important being the absence of any proper reserve system, as has already been

discussed. But that was not all. The Army was also poorly equipped with an almost total lack of ancillary services like signals and mechanical transport. The artillery and medical services were also primitive, and it is a wonder that the Army had performed so well. After the war, a committee under Lord Esher was set up to identify the defects in Indian Army and to make recommendations for their rectification. The committee made some useful suggestions regarding organization, training and equipment of the Army, many of which unfortunately were not implemented due to economic reasons. However, the reforms did yield some positive results.

The Reserve System was established on a better footing and the terms of service for the Indian ranks were improved. They were "now fed, clothed and housed" by the State. The command and distribution system of the Army was also streamlined. The Army was divided into four Commands, while the troops were distributed into three categories. The Covering Troops were to deal with frontier outbreaks and to provide a screen while the Field Army mobilized. The Field Army of four divisions and five cavalry brigades was to be India's strike force in case of war. The third category was of Internal Security Troops for dealing with civil disturbances within India.[9]

The organization of infantry battalions also underwent changes, and the peace establishment of active battalions was reduced to 774, with twelve British and twenty Indian officers. Each battalion was composed of Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters Wing and four companies: each divided into four platoons. Each platoon was further divided into four sections of eight to eleven men. Of these, three were rifle sections, while the fourth was a Lewis gun section. The Headquarters Wing was later designated as the Headquarters Company and was composed of machine gun personnel, signallers, tradesmen and the band; with all classes represented proportionately.[10]

The most important change, however, was the introduction of the Regimental Group System, by which four to five single-battalion infantry regiments with bonds of shared history and common outlook were formed into Infantry Groups. The groups were numbered according to their seniority and one battalion in each group was designated as its Training Battalion. The Training Battalion was responsible for the enrolment and training of recruits as well as the maintenance of records. It had one company for each active battalion, which supplied the officers and instructors. The officers and men of a group were liable to serve in any battalion of the group. In 1922, the Groups were designated as Regiments.[11] The new system was a vast improvement on the previous one and withstood the pressures of the next World War well. The regiments of the Indian Army are considered the crowning achievement of the British military system in India. Introduction of the Regimental Groups was the maturing of the regimental system and fostered regimental spirit like never before.

On 21 March 1921, the 8th Infantry Group came into being. It was composed of five Burma Battalions of the old Madras Army. These battalions shared a common bond of history and traditions and had been linked together under the previous system. During the Great War, they had provided drafts of officers and men to each other, and it was only natural that they should be grouped together. The new system required streamlining of class composition of the battalions, and the composition chosen for the 8th Infantry Group was:

Punjabi Muslims	Two companies (50%)
Sikhs	One company (25%)
Hindu Gujars[12]	One company (25%)

As a result of the new classification, the group lost many of its traditional classes like Dogras, Hindustani Muslims, Brahmins and Rajputs, while Hindu Gujars were introduced for the first time. Large scale re-shuffling had to be carried out, as drafts of

appropriate classes were received from other battalions, while redundant classes were either mustered out or transferred to other regiments. The task was not only difficult, but also painful, as many of the troops who had fought with the battalions had to leave. In the 91st Punjabis, after the reorganization, less than 25 percent of the strength was composed of men who had served with the battalion overseas.[13] In 1923, orders were issued by the Army Headquarters designating the recruitment areas for the Regiment. The recruitment of Punjabi Muslims (PMs) was restricted to Districts Jhelum, Rawalpindi (less Murree and Kahuta *tehsils*), Attock (less Attock *tehsil*) and Mianwali, plus Khushab *tehsil* of District Shahpur. Hindu Gujars were initially restricted to Rajputana, but the recruiting area was later extended to include District Gurgaon.[14]

Initially, 93rd Burma Infantry was chosen as the Training Battalion, but this was changed to 2/89th Punjabis in October 1921. The battalion was permanently stationed at Lahore, and the regimental depots of the five active battalions were absorbed into the Training Battalion. On 1 December 1922, the Infantry Group System was replaced by the Regimental Group System and 8th Infantry Group was re-designated as 8th Punjab Regiment. As a result, the battalions were renumbered and renamed:[15]

1/89th Punjabis became 1st Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 1/8th Punjab

90th Punjabis became 2nd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 2/8th Punjab

91st Punjabis (Light Infantry) became 3rd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 3/8th Punjab

92nd Prince of Wales's Own Punjabis became 4th Battalion (Prince of Wales's Own) 8th Punjab Regiment or 4/8th Punjab

93rd Burma Infantry became 5th (Burma) Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 5/8th Punjab

2/89th Punjabis became 10th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment or 10/8th Punjab (Training Battalion)[15]

The new uniform of 8th Punjab Regiment was drab with blue facings, while Chinthe, the mythical Burmese lion-dragon; sacred guardian of Buddhist pagodas, was adopted as emblem of the new regiment.[16] The elegant badge was a modification of the badge already in the use of 90th Punjabis. 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' was adopted as the regimental march.[17]

After the formation of the Regiment, annual Commanding Officers' Conferences were instituted to discuss regimental affairs. These conferences were hosted by the Training Battalion at Lahore in February each year. From 1925 onwards, the annual conference was combined with the Regimental Reunion, which was held biennially until 1929, and then every four years. The reunions were colourful events with inter-battalion sports competitions, dramas and dinners. They were attended by large numbers of pensioners, providing an opportunity to renew old acquaintances and maintain continuity with the past. These events were "of great value in welding officers and men of the Regiment into one family".[18]

For their outstanding performance in the Great War, the 92nd Punjabis were made 'Prince of Wales's Own' and on 1 January 1922, Edward, the Prince of Wales was gazetted as their Colonel-in-Chief.[19] In 1924, he became the Colonel-in-Chief of 8th Punjab Regiment.[20] The following year, 8th Punjab Regimental Dinner Club was formed in England. On the eve of Derby Day each year, retired and serving officers of the Regiment would get together at Piccadilly Hotel in London for a formal Annual Dinner. Speeches would be made and toasts proposed. The serving officers, who were on leave at the time, would brief the veterans on regimental affairs. After dinner, "lies were swapped and yarns told until midnight, altogether a most cheery and enjoyable evening". The Colonel-in-Chief was invited each year, and although he was rarely able to attend, a message from him was invariably received.

The Annual Dinner was another great institution that enriched the Regiment by maintaining its links with the past.

The Northwest Frontier 1921-41

The British engagement on the Northwest Frontier of India has become part of folklore. For a hundred years, the Frontier was an obsession for the rulers in Simla and Whitehall. What began as an effort to counter Russian influence in Afghanistan became an entanglement with the frontier tribesmen that continued long after the Great Game was over. The tribesmen of the Frontier had never acknowledged any outside law. But it was not only their independence that they were jealous of; they also considered it their birthright to raid the settled areas. The British, on their part, felt compelled to stamp their authority in what they saw as their backyard. Ever so often, one or the other tribe would become restless and launch a raid. The British would respond with a punitive action and things would settle down—only to flare up again. It was almost a love-hate relationship, where both sides seemed to relish the tussle. After the Third Afghan War, the British introduced airplanes and armoured cars to frontier operations but were unable to make much of an impression on the tribesmen. In fact, the next two decades saw an ever-increasing level of violence on the Frontier, which kept a large number of troops permanently engaged in the region.

Much of the 'romance' of the Frontier can be attributed to stories of men like Nicholson, Abbott and Warburton, and to storytellers like John Masters. But the reality of life on the Frontier was quite different. It was a dull and dreary existence in a harsh and unforgiving land. The military operations too, can hardly be described as glamorous, with endless marching in search of an elusive enemy and the ever-present threat of the sniper. For those who were captured, the usual outcome was a brutal death and

mutilation. For the tribesmen, the results were even worse. British punitive expeditions invariably resulted in the destruction of their villages, burning of crops, and uprooting of trees—hardly the stuff of romance. Despite a century of warfare, the British were unable to subdue the tribesmen; all they succeeded in was keeping them ignorant and isolated.

The British had raised special frontier units to serve on their turbulent frontiers—both in the northwest as well as in the northeast. Among the latter were the 8th Punjabis, who as Burma Battalions had served throughout in Burma during its pacification. After their delocalisation from Burma, they saw extensive service on the Northwest Frontier, giving them the unique distinction of service on both frontiers. In 1903, Lord Kitchener made service on the Northwest Frontier compulsory for all infantry units, and starting in 1916, the 8th Punjabis were continuously employed there. The first to arrive were 1/89th Punjabis (1/8th Punjab), who took part in the Mohmand Blockade of 1916. They were followed in 1917, by 2/89th Punjabis (10/8th Punjab). The Third Afghan War was followed by a general uprising in Waziristan, which was not quelled until 1924. 2/89th Punjabis were joined by 1/90th Punjabis (2/8th Punjab) and 2/90th Punjabis. The latter remained employed in Waziristan till 1921, suffering a number of casualties, including 41 killed and 49 wounded in a night raid on the camp of one of its companies on 21 October 1920.[21]

In November 1921, the troubles spilled out of Waziristan, when a party of some 650 Wazirs entered Baluchistan and besieged the Zhob Levy post at Haji Khan Kila. At the time, the 92nd Punjabis (4/8th Punjab) were stationed at Quetta. On 24 November, a company of eighty men under Captain F Entwisle and Second Lieutenant AB Garrett was despatched to Barshor Valley, about sixteen miles northeast of Pishin to intercept the tribesmen. Despite repeated requests, the company was not allowed to carry its Lewis guns by Brigadier General AL Tarver,

the Brigade Commander. Next day, as the company reached Barshor, it was surrounded by about 450 well-armed tribesmen. Despite putting up stout resistance, the heavily outnumbered and lightly armed company was virtually annihilated. As the tribesmen made the final rush, Second Lieutenant Garrett, although wounded, killed three of them with his revolver, before being cut down. Besides the two British officers, one Indian officer and 45 ORs were killed, while nineteen were wounded. Several of the wounded also died later. The remaining soldiers were captured by the tribesmen, although a few were able to escape later under the cover of darkness. The raiders escaped into Afghanistan unmolested.[22]

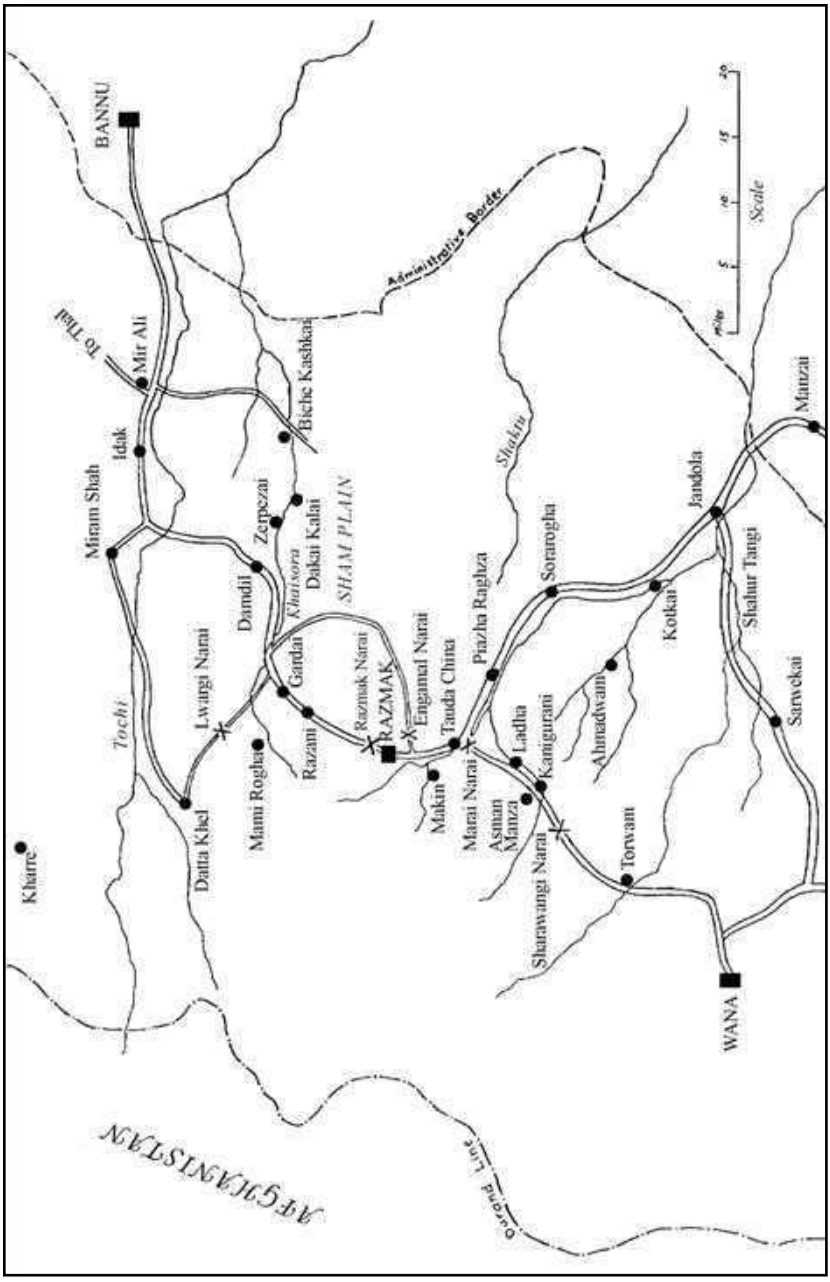
One result of the protracted uprising by Wazirs and Mahsuds was British penetration of Waziristan and establishment of permanent garrisons at Razmak and Wana. A new form of frontier warfare was introduced, called 'Piqueting'. To protect the marching columns from snipers in the hills, piquets would be posted on the surrounding heights to act as lookouts, and to deny the enemy any vantage point from which to snipe. However, it only partly solved the problem, as the piquets themselves became targets, especially when withdrawing.[23] Another method was to deploy permanent piquets along the line of communication by manning them continuously. But they required too much manpower and were not always feasible.[24]

In 1921, the 91st Punjabis (3/8th Punjab), then stationed at Poona, were mobilized for operations in South Waziristan. On 18 November, they arrived at Kotkai on the Takki Zam and were detailed on road protection duties. During the next twelve months, the battalion had several minor skirmishes with the Mahsuds, while manning permanent piquets. On 18 December 1922, two companies of the battalion took part in a punitive expedition against Mahsuds near Kotkai. During the operation, B Company held an advanced position for three hours under heavy fire and suffered several casualties including Subedar Sohan Ram, who was

killed. Sepoy Kishan Sahai was awarded the IDSM for keeping his Lewis gun in action despite being under fire. Two other sepoys were also awarded the IDSM for evacuating two wounded comrades and retrieving the dead body of their subedar. In December 1923, the battalion left Waziristan for Lucknow.[25]

From April 1922 to February 1924, 1/8th Punjab was stationed at Peshawar,[26] while 2/8th Punjab served at Bannu from April 1923 to December 1924.[27] Both battalions were employed on road protection duties. They were followed in December 1923, by 5/8th Punjab, who suffered a few casualties while serving at Razani.[28] In December 1924, 4/8th Punjab arrived at Bannu for their first tour of duty on the Frontier.[29] By then, the situation in Waziristan had been brought reasonably under control. The next five years were relatively calm, with no major outbreaks by the tribesmen. Both 1/8th and 3/8th Punjab returned to the Frontier for tours of duty, which passed without any major incidents.[30]

In 1927, Major General HW Jackson, CB, CSI, DSO, was appointed Colonel of 2/8th Punjab. He had been commandant of the battalion from 1920 to 1922.[31] The same year, Brigadier General LWY Campbell, CMG, was gazetted as the Colonel of 1/8th Punjab. He had commanded the battalion during the first year of the Great War, before taking over command of a brigade.[32] In July 1929, the organization of infantry battalions underwent further changes. The battalions were now composed of three rifle companies and a machine gun company besides the Headquarters Wing. This resulted in a reshuffling of personnel in order to ensure a proportionate representation of each class in the machine gun company.[33] On 15 February 1930, 3/8th Punjab was presented new Colours at Jhansi by General John Shea, GOC-in-C Eastern Command.[34] A month later, on 25 March 1930, 5/8th Punjab received its new Colours at Loralai from General Sir Charles Harington, GOC-in-C Western Command.[35]



27. Waziristan.

After the relative calm of the previous five years, the Frontier was again convulsed with violence in 1930. By now, a new element had entered the Frontier political landscape in the form of the Red Shirt leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He was closely allied with the Indian National Congress and soon, the Frontier was engulfed in civil unrest like the rest of India, where political agitation against British rule had become the norm. In April 1930, there were fierce riots in Peshawar following the arrest of Red Shirt leaders. Soon, the unrest spread to surrounding areas, and in June, seven thousand Afridis descended from Tirah to take advantage of the situation. However, the British responded swiftly and the Afridi *lashkar* retreated in a hurry. The tribesmen now decided to form a base in the Khajuri and Aka Khel foothills from where they could launch raids into Peshawar Valley. For the next several months, the situation remained tense, as the Afridis launched several successful raids from Khajuri. In October, the British decided to occupy the Khajuri and Aka Khel Plains permanently, and by March 1931, the tribesmen were showing signs of relenting. In October, a settlement was reached and the troubles subsided for the moment.

2/8th Punjab had arrived at Bannu in October 1929 and was called out several times in aid of civil power to quell minor disturbances. However, no serious incident occurred in the district.[36] On 12 August 1930, 3/8th Punjab was ordered to Rawalpindi in view of the Afridi threat to Peshawar. On 11 October, the battalion arrived in Peshawar with the 9th (Jhansi) Infantry Brigade. The 9th Brigade was given the task of occupying the Khajuri Plain, which was the winter grazing ground of Afridis. In conjunction with two other brigades, Khajuri was occupied a few days later. On 10 November, during an advance on the village of Wucha Garhi, 3/8th Punjab was involved in an encounter with the tribesmen in which one Indian officer and four ORs were wounded. Lance Naik Sheo Karan and Sepoy Sonia Singh were

awarded the IDSM for rescuing the wounded subedar under fire. For the next three months, the battalion was engaged in road building, construction of permanent piquets and patrolling. In January 1931, it returned to Jhansi.[37]

In 1931, the Training Battalion published the first issue of the annual 8th Punjab Regimental Magazine. The magazine contained accounts of the activities of each battalion over the preceding year and was most useful in keeping all the battalions informed about each other. Going through these issues, one is struck by the *esprit de corps* that appears to have firmly taken root in the Regiment. The magazines are a rich source of regimental records, besides providing a glimpse of life in an age now long gone.

In 1932, Major General ES Hastings, CB, DSO, Colonel of 4/8th Punjab died. He had re-raised the battalion in Burma, commanding it from 1891 to 1907. Major General JHF Lakin, CB, CSI, ADC, was appointed the new Colonel of 4/8th Punjab.[38] In 1936, the Prince of Wales succeeded to the British throne as King Edward VIII and consented to continue as the Colonel-in-Chief of 8th Punjab Regiment.[39] In 1937, the Regiment lost another illustrious veteran, when Lieutenant General Sir Henry D' Urban Keary, KCB, KCIE, DSO, Colonel of 3/8th Punjab died. He had commanded the battalion for seventeen years after re-raising it in 1892. The General was a much loved and admired figure, who had greatly distinguished himself in the First World War as a brigade and division commander.[40] His place as Colonel of the Battalion was taken by Major General Edward P Quinan, CB, DSO, OBE.[41]

In 1936, trouble again flared up on the Frontier. This time, the disturbances were much more serious and prolonged. The troubles started when a Hindu girl in Bannu eloped with a Wazir tribesman and converted to Islam. On the complaint of her parents, the civil court ordered that she be placed in the custody of her parents. The issue inflamed passions all around, and a mullah from

Waziristan, better known as the Faqir of Ipi, announcing that Islam was in danger, declared jihad against the British. The Wazirs rose up in revolt and soon the entire Waziristan was ablaze. The wily and skilful Faqir kept the British on the run for several years, tying down large number of troops badly needed elsewhere. Even after independence, the Faqir continued to cause trouble for the Pakistani Government. He was never caught.[42]

In November 1936, the British despatched two columns towards Biche Kashkai, the area of Tori Khel Wazirs—the tribe of Faqir of Ipi—to overawe the tribesmen. While the Razmak Brigade (Razcol) advanced eastwards down the Khaisora River Valley, the Bannu Brigade (Tocol) moved southwards from Mir Ali. Both the columns made heavy work of it and suffered serious casualties. The tribesmen were not impressed at all, and for the next nine years, fighting in Waziristan raged on with varying intensity.[43] Typical of the Frontier, no major battles took place; the tribesmen preferring their usual tactics of attacking isolated piquets, ambush and sniping. Column after column was despatched in search of the elusive Faqir, who always managed to stay one step ahead of the British. Between 1936 and 1943, five 8th Punjabi battalions were involved in operations in Waziristan, while Major General Quinan (3/8th Punjab) served as Commander of Razmak Brigade and then Waziristan District.

After the fiasco at Biche Kashkai, the British decided to launch a punitive expedition against Tori Khels. In December 1936, the 2nd (Rawalpindi) Infantry Brigade was moved to Waziristan and construction of an all-weather road from Mir Ali to Biche Kashkai was started. Four flights of the Royal Air Force were also drafted in for the operation. While the column from Mir Ali worked on the road, Razcol advanced along the Khaisora. By 24 December, the road was completed and several tribal villages were destroyed.[44]

On 1 December, 2/8th Punjab left Rawalpindi with 2nd Brigade, arriving at Mir Ali on 6 December. The battalion spent the next two months working on the road and piqueting the right flank of the brigade during the advance towards Biche Kashkai. Other than the usual sniping, no serious fighting took place. The battalion returned to Rawalpindi on 30 January 1937.[45] In the meantime, 4/8th Punjab, which had arrived at Razmak in October 1936, joined Razcol at Damdil in December. The column advanced to Zerpezai but encountered no opposition, returning to Razmak in January. The situation around Razmak remained tense and in April, while holding Alexandra Ridge Piquet, a party of 4/8th Punjab at a water piquet was ambushed by the tribesmen. Seven Other Ranks were killed and three were wounded. Naik Mohammad Khan was awarded the IDSM for rescuing a wounded comrade.[46]

Just as the brigades brought into Waziristan had returned to their peace stations, the situation in Waziristan again deteriorated, and yet another operation was launched. This time, an advance was planned against Faqir of Ipi's headquarters at Arsal Kot in the remote Shaktu Valley. Several brigades were mobilized from India, including the 2nd Brigade, which arrived at Mir Ali on 15 April 1937.[47] Moving southwards, 2/8th Punjab arrived at Biche Kashkai with the 2nd Brigade on 27 April. During the night, an attack on the brigade camp was repulsed. On 29 April, the brigade climbed the Mazai Raghza feature south of Khaisora. Throughout the day, several small actions were fought with the tribesmen. As the troops were withdrawing from the feature, 2/8th Punjab suffered four casualties including Sepoy Jan Mohammad, who was killed. An immediate counterattack was launched to recover the casualties. Naik Surkhuru Khan and Sepoys Nawab Ali and Amir Ali were awarded the IDSM for gallantry during the action. The battalion then moved to Idak and was deployed on road protection duties from 5 to 26 May.[48]

In the meantime, on 11 May, a division-size force (Wazdiv) advanced from Dosalli towards the Faqir's headquarters at Arsal Kot. In a surprise move, Bannu Brigade instead of following the valley approach, made a night march over Iblanke Ridge and caught the tribesmen in the right flank and rear. The tribesmen were totally surprised and soon melted away.[49] On 27 May, the 2nd Brigade again moved to Biche Kashkai, and marching over the hills, made a rendezvous with Wazdiv at Arsal Kot. The brigade then proceeded to destroy the village and the cave hideouts of the Faqir, who had escaped into Afghanistan. The British forces then withdrew to Sham Plain and 2/8th Punjab went into bivouac at Coronation Camp.[50]

On 9 June, a platoon of 2/8th Punjab was ordered to establish a piquet on a hill commanding Sham Plain. As the platoon was nearing the top, it was ambushed by about thirty tribesmen concealed in rocks and bushes. One sepoy was immediately killed. The tribesmen then charged down the hill but were driven back by heavy fire. Naik Dil Sukh, although mortally wounded, continued to encourage his men and as the platoon advanced up the hill, the tribesmen fled, having suffered about ten casualties. For conspicuous gallantry, Naik Dil Sukh and Sepoy Rattan Ram were awarded the IOM, while Naik Nadan Ram received the IDSM.[51]

After spending the next three months on road protection duties, the battalion moved to Sulaiman Khel against the Bhittanis, who had been raiding villages in the plains. The battalion was engaged in some minor encounters. By now, the tribesmen were getting tired of the incessant fighting, and by the end of the year, the revolt had largely died down, although the Faqir of Ipi continued to foment trouble. In December 1937, 2/8th Punjab moved back to Rawalpindi. For the operations in Waziristan, Lieutenant Colonel Ivor Jones, the Commandant, was awarded the DSO, while Subedar Major Sardar Khan received the IOM.[52]

In the meantime, at Razmak, 4/8th Punjab had remained busy in road protection and column duties, suffering a few casualties in July 1937. In May 1938, the battalion accompanied a column to Datta Khel, where a tribal *lashkar* was besieging some Scouts. In July, the battalion was again on the move, this time to Kharre in Tochi Valley, where the Faqir was assembling a large *lashkar*. The *lashkar* was dispersed and the battalion returned to Razmak. After operating in some difficult country west of Datta Khel in September and October, the battalion arrived at Peshawar in December. During its two and a half years long stay in Waziristan, it had suffered 28 casualties, sixteen of whom were killed.[53]

In 1938, the organization of infantry underwent further changes. The battalions were divided into four rifle companies and a headquarters company. Each rifle company was divided into three platoons, which were further divided into three sections. The light machine gun became the principal weapon of infantry, while each battalion was also to be equipped with mortars and anti-tank guns. The total strength of a battalion was fixed at 662, all ranks. Unfortunately, at the outbreak of the Second World War, very few units had been equipped according to the new establishment, with most of them lacking anti-tank weapons and motorized transport.[54]

Since December 1923, 5/8th Punjab had seen continuous service in Baluchistan and the NWFP. They arrived at Jamrud in 1935, and much to their disgust, in November 1937, they were posted to Kohat—yet another frontier station. In April 1938, the battalion moved to Spinwam in Tori Khel country in support of Tochi Scouts, who were having some trouble with the tribesmen. From June to November, it was employed on road protection duties on the Bannu-Kohat Road during operations against Mehr Dil and his band of outlaws, who had been raiding in and around Bannu. In early 1940, the battalion was again engaged in operations against Mehr Dil in the Ahmedzai Salient. By May, the

outlaw band was dispersed and the battalion moved back to Kohat.[55]

In October 1940, 5/8th Punjab moved to Razmak. On 7 December, Razmak Brigade was despatched to deal with a band of troublesome Mahsuds in the inaccessible mountain country south of Razmak. During the first day's march to Tauda China, 5/8th Punjab was detailed to provide piquets along the route. As the rearguard of the column passed Pakalita Star feature, where three piquets of B Company were posted, signal was given to the piquets to withdraw. The first piquet was seen descending into a gorge, led by Captain RR Chhikara, the Company Commander. However, the piquet failed to reappear, and a Gun Position Officer reported that he had seen tribesmen moving about Pakalita Star. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel CF Faulkner decided to go up himself to investigate.[56]

What happened next is not fully clear and a Court of Inquiry held later was inconclusive. Briefly, Captain Chhikara and his men were ambushed as they descended into the gorge, and all were killed. In the meantime, Colonel Faulkner had arrived at the other two piquets and gave the order to take up defence for the night. However, the tribesmen attacked the position, and the Colonel was shot through the head. As their casualties started to mount, the men panicked and tried to flee but were skilfully cut down by the tribesmen. During the night, a few exhausted survivors were able to reach the brigade camp. Next morning, a relief column was despatched, only to find dead and mutilated bodies of the soldiers. The tribesmen had melted away after collecting the weapons of the dead men.[57] During the action, the battalion suffered casualties of two officers and 53 ORs killed, and one officer and 40 ORs wounded.[58] It was the worst disaster for the Regiment during its long years on the Frontier.

It was a difficult time for the battalion, but their new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel RM Gore soon put them

back on their feet. On 31 January 1941, the battalion was again on the move, this time to Ahmed Khel in Tochi Valley with Tocol. During the operations, Sepoy Fazal Dad was awarded the IDSM, when despite being wounded, he attacked a building in a village from which some tribesmen were firing through loopholes. He climbed the building and after making a hole in the roof, killed six tribesmen by dropping grenades. After spending the next few months in training, the battalion was again engaged in Tochi Valley in June for Datta Khel operations with Razcol. This was the last operation of 5/8th Punjab on the Frontier during which they suffered several more casualties. Subedar Than Singh was awarded the IDSM for gallantly leading his platoon in capturing a spur on Kani Rogha under hostile fire. Sepoy Tara Singh also won the IDSM the same day, when he rescued a wounded comrade while exposed to fire. On 29 August, the battalion returned to Razmak, and in October, it left the Frontier for Secunderabad.[59]

While there might have been a number of reasons for British involvement on the Frontier, there has always been a hint of suspicion that they deliberately kept the pot boiling in order to keep their troops in fighting trim. Compared to the great test that the Indian Army faced during the Second World War, the frontier operations seem trivial; but they were not. These were difficult operations against a formidable foe and required toughness, resilience and resourcefulness on the part of the troops—qualities that would serve them well in the great battles that were to follow.

Indianisation

It was an article of faith among the British that only they were capable of commanding Indian troops. During the First World War, deterioration in the performance of some Indian units with high casualty rates among their British officers reinforced this view. General James Willcocks, Commander of the Indian Corps

in France enlightened the posterity by explaining that, "The Indian is simply not fit to lead his men against Europeans; he will lead a charge or cover a retirement, but if he has to think he fails. It is the presence and natural instincts of the white man which the Indian officer can *never* replace. The Indian has not the instincts which make leaders in modern war. There is in fact no solution; the European and the Indian are built on different lines, the one to command men, the other to wait for guidance before he issues commands".[60]

It was a view universally shared by the British. But it was also a situation of their own making. The Indian officers were chosen not so much for their military capability and initiative as for their loyalty. Even the senior-most among them was junior to British subalterns. Denied the respect and status due to them, and with all initiative stifled, it was absurd to expect these middle-aged men to become effective commanders in the field. But despite this, many of them had performed splendidly in the war. In fact, the casualty rate among Indian officers had also been high and invariably included the more energetic officers.

After the war, the British came under increasing pressure to open the Officer Corps to Indians. During the war, it had been impossible to find suitable replacements for British officers who had become casualties, and it was generally accepted that some solution had to be found. The most intense pressure came from Indian Nationalists, who understood that if they were to achieve self-rule, they would need Indian officers to run the Army. But opening the officer corps of an Imperial Army to its conquered subjects was akin to letting in the Trojan horse. After all, the very purpose of the Indian Army was to perpetuate British rule in India. And herein lay the dilemma.

But it was an issue that could no longer be ignored. A start was made in 1917, by granting King's Commission to nine officers of the Imperial Cadet Corps, who were all scions of the landed

gentry. This was followed in 1918, by setting up a Temporary School for Indian Cadets at Indore, and offering ten vacancies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. To prepare Indian cadets for Sandhurst, the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College was opened at Dehra Dun in 1922, on the pattern of British public schools. To differentiate the new King's Commissioned Indian Officers or KCOs from the existing Indian officers, subedars and jemadars were designated as Viceroy's Commissioned Officers or VCOs.[61]

The most vexing problem for the British was the question of British officers serving under Indians. As Lord Rawlinson, C-in-C Indian Army wrote, "old officers say they won't send their sons out to serve under natives". The solution found was to select eight units of infantry, cavalry and the pioneers for 'Indianisation'. No British subalterns were to be posted to these units, and thus, none would have to serve under native officers. Under Indian political pressure, the Indian intake in Sandhurst was increased to twenty-five in 1927. But the eight Indianised units could not absorb so many officers each year. So, it was decided to phase out VCOs from these units, their places being filled by Indian KCOs. Indian officers would now lead platoons rather than companies. Dubbed 'Platoonism', it effectively reduced their chances of advancement. Indian officers were furious at the blatant discrimination. Indian ORs also resented the measure, as it blocked their promotion to the VCO rank.[62] The new Indian officers had to encounter racism at every step of the way. Starting at Sandhurst and continuing into the regimental messes and local clubs—closed to the natives—life for many of these pioneers was an ordeal.

Although the entire process was riven by controversy and created a lot of ill will, the important thing was that it continued. However, the limited number of vacancies offered to the Indians made the process very slow, and by 1932, only 141 Indians had graduated from Sandhurst. To speed up the process, the number of

units to be Indianised was increased and an Indian Military Academy with an annual intake of sixty cadets was opened at Dehra Dun in 1932. These graduates were designated as Indian Commissioned Officers or ICOs and their status, pay and allowances were below those of KCOs.[63] This legacy of discrimination would come to haunt the British during the Second World War.

Second Lieutenant Mir Haider was the first King's Commissioned Indian Officer of 8th Punjab Regiment. He was commissioned on 1 December 1919, from the officer training school at Indore, and posted to 92nd Punjabis on 1 December 1920.[64] During the Second World War, he commanded a Garrison unit of 8th Punjab Regiment. He also commanded 9/8th Punjab in 1949, before retiring later that year.[65] In 1932, eight more units including 5/8th Punjab were chosen for Indianisation and four Indian officers were posted to the battalion by the end of the year. Among them was Lieutenant Fazal-ur-Rahman Kallue, who had been commissioned in the Mahratta Light Infantry in 1927.[66] He commanded 5/8th Punjab in 1947, and was appointed Colonel of 8th Punjab Regiment in 1952. He retired as a Brigadier in 1954.

The British had to pay dearly for their churlish attitude, when at the start of the Second World War, they could find only 400 Indian officers for the rapidly expanding Army. Indianisation was abandoned, and all arms and services were opened to Indian officers. The intake at Dehra Dun was increased to 600 and new Officer Training Schools were opened, offering admission to all classes. Several thousand emergency commissions were awarded but even then, the Indian Army remained short of officers throughout the war.[67] Indian officers performed well during the war. Several of them commanded battalions, and one even a brigade. British officers had no problems serving under them. War had swept aside all rancour of the past.

9

The Second World War
Growth and Expansion

The First World War was supposed to have been the "war to end all wars". Instead, it spawned a war, which was more terrible than anything experienced before. Never before had humans been slaughtered on such an industrial scale. The sheer number of casualties is mind-boggling: sixty million dead in six years. It was total war on a global scale, where entire populations were mobilized for the war effort, and the civilians themselves were often the primary targets of war. The new war was no longer of static trench warfare but one of mobility, fearsome airpower and ruthless pursuit of military and political objectives. The destruction it wrought hardly left any nation untouched.

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, India found herself automatically at war. But during the last twenty years, Indian Army's needs had been badly neglected, and it was totally unprepared to take the field. Having forgotten the lessons of the last war, the authorities still believed that the primary role of the Indian Army was to guard the Northwest Frontier. At the outbreak of hostilities, there were 189,000 men in the Indian Army, one third of them administration and line of communication personnel. The cavalry still trained on horses, the infantry did not have any anti-tank weapons, the artillery was obsolete and the Corps of Engineers and Signals were woefully short of equipment. There was hardly any motor transport and the supply department relied mostly on mules.[1]

Incredibly, as late as 1940, the British still believed that the Indian Army would not be required for any major operations, and there was no general mobilization. The reserves were not recalled,

and tens of thousands of volunteers were turned away.[2] The stunning German victories in Europe and the rising Japanese tide in the east soon shook the British from their inertia, and the expansion of the Indian Army began in earnest. It was a mammoth task, especially considering the poor state the Army was in, and the precious months that had been lost. But now, the British ran into another obstacle. The Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress not only refused to lend support to the war effort but started actively sabotaging it. As Gandhi launched his 'Quit India' campaign, he "sanctioned destruction of railways, bridges and other line of communication structures and facilities—provided they were destroyed in a non-violent manner".[3] Widespread disturbances ensued for which a large number of troops had to be deployed. Only the Muslims, led by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, offered full support for the war effort. It was no surprise then that Muslims formed a large proportion of the troops who fought in Africa, Italy, Malaya and Burma.[4]

Although attempts by Congress to sabotage the war effort caused widespread disruptions, they failed to deter Indians from volunteering in droves. By the end of the war, the Indian Army numbered 2,644,323 men—all volunteers.[5] It is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of the officers and men of the Indian Army that they overcame all handicaps, and adapting rapidly to the requirements of modern warfare, performed so admirably in the war. In Britain's darkest hours, it was the Indian Army that again stood by her side. During the entire war, there were only two campaigns that the British won largely on their own: North Africa and Burma. The Indian Army made a significant contribution to the first, while the victory in Burma was entirely its own.

During the Second World War, 8th Punjab Regiment rapidly expanded in size by raising seven new active battalions, two garrison battalions and several garrison companies. The

Training Battalion grew into a large training facility as it recruited and trained thousands of recruits for the new battalions. The following account gives an overview of the Regiment during the Second World War. The battalions that saw active service have been dealt with in the relevant chapters.

Training Battalion (10/8th Punjab):[6] When war broke out in September 1939, Lieutenant Colonel AG Russell was commanding the Training Battalion. During the next three months, the battalion raised 6 and 9 Indian Garrison Companies and recalled the reservists, who reported during January 1940. In August, 6/8th and 7/8th Punjab were raised. Expansion of the Training Battalion began in earnest in 1941, when the number of existing training companies was increased to six and they were reorganized into double-companies. Another four active battalions were raised: the 8/8th, 9/8th, 14/8th and 15/8th Punjab, besides 25th (Garrison) Battalion. The nucleus of the new battalions was formed by milking the existing battalions. This did not please the active battalions, as these personnel by necessity had to be the best in their units. But it was a bitter pill that had to be swallowed.

In 1942, another two double-companies were raised besides 26th (Garrison) Battalion. The designation of Training Battalion was changed to 10/8th Punjab Regimental Training Centre, while the training double-companies were designated as Training Battalions numbered 1 to 5. The expansion resulted in a great influx of personnel and at one time, the strength of the Centre reached 6000. Great dedication was required by the training and administration staff to carry out what was not only a very demanding job, but also a crucial one. Besides the initial training of recruits and despatch of reinforcements to active battalions in the field, the Centre had to maintain meticulous records and carry out settlement of war casualties.

Throughout the war, performance of the Regimental Centre was highly commendable. A large amount of credit for this goes to

Colonel SA Jennison, who commanded the Centre from October 1941 to July 1945. One of the outstanding personalities to serve in the Regimental Centre was Subedar Major Mohammad Sadiq, who was recalled from retirement in 1942. He remained Subedar Major of the Centre throughout the war and during the post-war period and was of great assistance to the Commandant. Major CH Townsend, MBE, Quartermaster of the Regimental Centre was another exceptional officer, who rendered invaluable service to the Regiment.

During the war, Boys Companies were raised by all regiments and proved to be a great success. These companies consisted of about 300 selected boys of fifteen to sixteen years of age, who were trained and educated in the regimental centres. By the time they reached enlistment age, they were already half-trained with a much better physique than other recruits from the villages. In 1943, designation of the Centre was changed to 8th Punjab Regimental Centre. Two more garrison companies, the 79 Indian Defence Company and 108 Garrison Company were raised, besides 16/8th Punjab. In 1944, a Specialist Training Battalion was formed to train personnel of signal, mortar and military transport platoons.

The end of the war in 1945 brought pressures of a different kind in the form of demobilization. Most of the battalions and companies raised during the war were disbanded. Liberated prisoners of war of 1/8th and 7/8th Punjab were received and 1/8th Punjab was re-raised. By the end of 1946, more than 8000 men had been demobilized. The Regimental Centre ran special training programmes in cottage industry to make the released soldiers useful in their civilian lives. More than 2300 men were given courses in farming, animal husbandry and weaving. It was not until the middle of 1947 that the Centre was able to return to its peacetime establishment, only to face new challenges following the partition of India and independence of Pakistan.

In 1946, the Regiment had the honour of its pipe band—considered the best in the Army—being selected to lead the Indian Infantry contingent in the Victory Parade in London. The band was led by the renowned piper Jemadar Ghulam Haider and received much acclaim during its visit to the United Kingdom. The same year, a brass band was formed at the Regimental Centre under Jemadar Wazir Ali of 4/8th Punjab. Wazir Ali was a legend of his time. Born in 1879, he had enlisted in 1893 and was still going strong in 1946. Over the years, he had been instrumental in making the 4th Battalion's band the envy of the Indian Army. A pool of pipers also began training at the Centre and by 1947, all battalions had regained their pipe bands.

6/8th Punjab (MMG):[7] The battalion was raised at Bakloh on 7 August 1940, by Lieutenant Colonel DFW Warren, and was known as 'Warren's Foot'. After short stays at Bakloh and Lahore, the battalion proceeded to the Frontier in February 1941, where it served at Bannu, Manzai and Mir Ali. In November 1942, it moved to Upper Sindh for operations against the Hurs. The Hurs are disciples of Pir of Pagaro and are fanatically loyal to him. They had a reputation for lawlessness, which became a problem for the British in 1942, when they started sabotaging the North Western Railway line, disrupting the movement of troops. Martial Law was declared in the disturbed areas, and several battalions were deployed to apprehend the miscreants and bring the situation under control.[8] During the operation, the Battalion Headquarters of 6/8th Punjab was located at Tando Mitha Khan, while the companies were dispersed over a wide area. Most of the activity was in the form of patrolling on camels to deter the Hurs, and where possible, to apprehend them. By February 1943, the situation was brought under control and the battalion returned to Waziristan.

In October 1943, the battalion moved to Landi Kotal from Razmak. Over the next year, it changed several stations in the

North West Frontier Province, until June 1944, when it joined the 155th Independent Brigade at Risalpur. The battalion was converted into a Medium Machine Gun (MMG) Battalion and moved to Fort Salop near Jamrud for equipment and training. At this time, Sikhs were withdrawn from the battalion, and it was reorganized with Punjabi Muslims and Gujars in equal proportion. By December, the battalion was ready for war and was posted to Nasik as the Machine Gun Battalion of 23rd Indian Division. The battalion took part in Operation Zipper and landed in Malaya just after the capitulation of Japan in August 1945. In October 1945, it moved to Java in the Dutch East Indies, returning to Malaya in November 1946, where the machine guns were withdrawn. In January 1947, the battalion arrived at Kamptee in India, where it was stationed at the time of independence.

7/8th Punjab: The battalion was raised on 7 August 1940, by Lieutenant Colonel Willis Southern. In 1941, it was posted to the 44th Indian Brigade of 17th Indian Division. In January 1942, the 44th Brigade was sent as reinforcement to Singapore and the battalion landed there on 25 January. With the surrender of British forces on 15 February, it became Prisoner of War. During the brief campaign and long captivity, it suffered heavy losses, including seven officers, three VCOs and 156 ORs killed. On its repatriation in 1946, the battalion was not re-raised. However, one officer, one VCO and 105 ORs were posted to 1/8th Punjab.[9]

8/8th Punjab:[10] The battalion was raised at Lahore on 1 May 1941, by Lieutenant Colonel WRF Trevelyan. It moved to Landi Kotal on the Frontier in October 1941. In January 1942, the battalion joined 4th Indian Brigade at Jhelum. It proceeded to Jessore in March, where it spent the next six weeks training and receiving equipment. In May, 4th Indian Brigade was posted to the newly formed 26th Indian Division. In October, 8/8th Punjab was deployed at Tamluk in Midnapur District to restore law and order, following widespread civil disturbances. During November, it was

employed in relief operations, when Tamluk was hit by a major cyclone.

In February 1943, the battalion rejoined 4th Brigade and took part in the First Arakan Campaign. It was withdrawn from the front in September for rest and refitting. During this period, Sikhs were withdrawn from the battalion, and its new composition became Punjabi Muslims and Gujars in equal proportion. After staying at Chittagong and Barrackpore, the battalion moved to Bethmangala in Mysore in December 1944. In November 1945, it left for Sumatra in the Dutch East Indies, returning to India in November 1946. At the time of independence, the battalion was stationed at Kohat.

9/8th Punjab: The battalion was raised at Lahore on 1 May 1941, by Lieutenant Colonel AGIA Goddard. After serving at Faizabad and Jhansi, it moved to Ceylon in January 1942, where the British were expecting a Japanese attack. One platoon served on Cocos Islands from January 1943 to February 1944, when the battalion returned to India and was stationed in Mysore. In July, it proceeded to Cyprus, returning in January 1946. On 16 May, the battalion was reconstituted as 1/8th Punjab at Lahore.[11]

14/8th Punjab: The battalion was raised at Lahore on 1 May 1941, by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander George. After two months' training, it took over duties of the Internal Security Battalion. In May 1942, the battalion received orders for conversion into an anti-aircraft regiment and on 1 June, 14/8th Punjab was re-designated as the 9th (Punjab) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Indian Artillery. After conversion training at Risalpur, it moved to South India in November. The Regimental Headquarters and one battery were based at Cochin, while the other two batteries were deployed at Vizagapatam and Madras. In March 1943, the regiment moved to Ceylon and was deployed in and around Colombo. Around this time, the Sikh battery was disbanded, and its place was taken by a Madrassi battery from India. In October,

the regiment proceeded to Trinconomalee, taking up defence of the harbour and oil installations. At the end of the war, the regiment was disbanded.[12]

15/8th Punjab: The battalion was raised in September 1941 and later converted into a training battalion for VCOs and NCOs. It was disbanded after the war.[13]

16/8th Punjab: The battalion was raised at Lahore on 15 August 1943, by Lieutenant Colonel RM Gore. Soon after, it moved to Chhindwara, where it became a training battalion of the 14th Indian Division, which was a jungle warfare training formation based at Chhindwara in Central India. The battalion was disbanded on 1 April 1946.[14]

Garrison Battalions: During the war, most of the regiments raised garrison battalions to guard military and strategic assets within India such as Prisoner of War camps, airfields, railways, bridges and other military installations. They were composed of over-age and medically down-categorized soldiers, who were unfit for active service. The 8th Punjab Regiment raised 25th (Garrison) Battalion on 1 April 1941 and 26th (Garrison) Battalion on 1 April 1942. Both battalions were disbanded in 1946.[15]

Garrison Companies: Garrison companies performed a myriad of duties including provision of guards, escorts and working parties. Many of them served overseas. During the war, 8th Punjab Regiment raised four garrison companies, while another six companies were affiliated from the Indian General Service Corps on 16 March 1943. The designation of these companies was changed in 1945 to reflect their regimental affiliations. In 1946, 108, 208, 308, 608, 708 and 1008 Garrison Companies were disbanded.[16] The rest survived until 1971, when all garrison companies in Pakistan Army were disbanded.[17]

508 Garrison Company was raised as 25 Indian Garrison Company at New Delhi in October 1940, for provision of escorts and guards at the residences of the Viceroy and the Commander-

in-Chief Indian Army. In 1943, it was affiliated with 8th Punjab Regiment, and in 1945, it was designated as 508 Garrison Company. After independence, the company moved to Thal, where it was engaged in evacuation of non-Muslims from Parachinar. After performing garrison duties at Nowshera, the company moved to Karachi in April 1948, where it took up guard duties at the official residences of Governor General and Prime Minister of Pakistan.[18]

808 Garrison Company was raised as 36 Indian Pioneer Company at Lahore in September 1940. In January 1941, it proceeded to East Africa, where it was engaged in building a POW camp for Italian prisoners and a road near Keren in Eritrea, suffering four casualties due to enemy shelling. In April, the company left for Egypt, where it was designated as 1210 Pioneer Company. The company was used for loading ammunition at the docks and digging trenches. After a few months at Haifa in Palestine, it returned to Mersa Matruh in Egypt in November 1941. In the last week of November, it was unloading fuel stores at Area 86 near Sollum, when it suffered four casualties due to firing by a German reconnaissance patrol. In December, the company proceeded to Benghazi, returning to Egypt in January 1942, where its designation was changed to 34 Indian Garrison Company. In March, it moved to Baghdad and performed guard duties for the next eleven months. In 1943, it was affiliated with 8th Punjab Regiment and in 1945, it was designated as 808 Garrison Company. During 1944, the company was deployed on railway protection duties in Iran. After serving at Shaiba, Kermanshah, Syria, Tripoli and Beirut, it returned to India in 1946. After independence, the company was employed in evacuation of Muslim refugees from India until August 1948.[19]

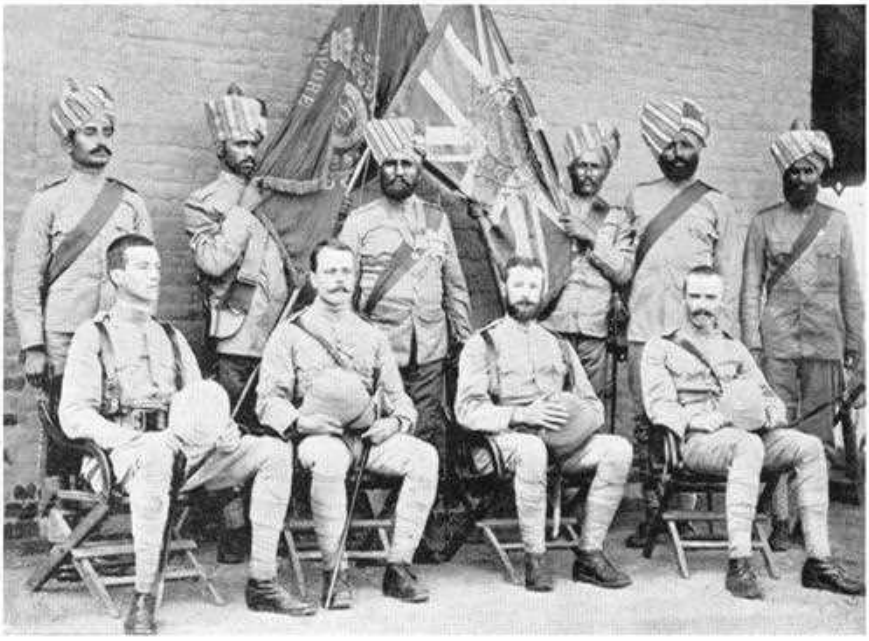
908 Garrison Company was raised as 1st Auxiliary Pioneer Battalion at Nowshera in January 1941. In June, it proceeded to Iraq, where it was employed in providing escorts and guards at

ordnance stores, supply depots and other military installations. In August 1942, it was designated as 66 Indian Garrison Company, and in 1943, it was affiliated with 8th Punjab Regiment. In 1945, its designation was changed to 908 Garrison Company. It returned to India in July 1947 and immediately proceeded to Lahore, where it was engaged in evacuation of Muslim refugees from India. After independence, the company served at Rawalpindi and Quetta, where it performed guard and escort duties.[20]

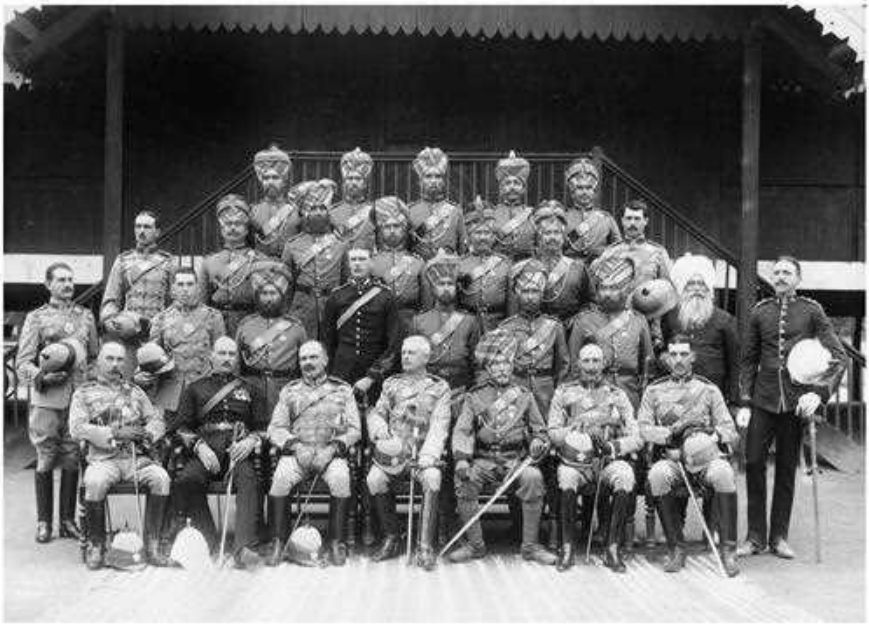
1008 Garrison Company was raised as 79 Indian Defence Company at Lahore on 15 February 1943. In March, it moved to Ranchi and then to Chittagong, where it provided guards for Headquarters XV Indian Corps. In June, the company returned to Ranchi, proceeding to Dhuchiapalong near Cox's Bazar in October. In January 1944, it moved to a village near Bawli Bazar in Burma and was engaged in vigorous patrolling besides providing protection to the Corps Headquarters. During the next year and a half, the company performed guard duties at Dhuchiapalong, Cox's Bazar and Akyab. In August 1945, it moved to Singapore with Headquarters XV Indian Corps and was employed in disarming Japanese soldiers. In October, it proceeded to Java, again with the Corps Headquarters. In 1945, it was designated as 1008 Garrison Company. On its return to India in 1946, the company was disbanded.[21]

Sepoy, 29th Madras Native Infantry.
Watercolour by Alex Hunter 1846.

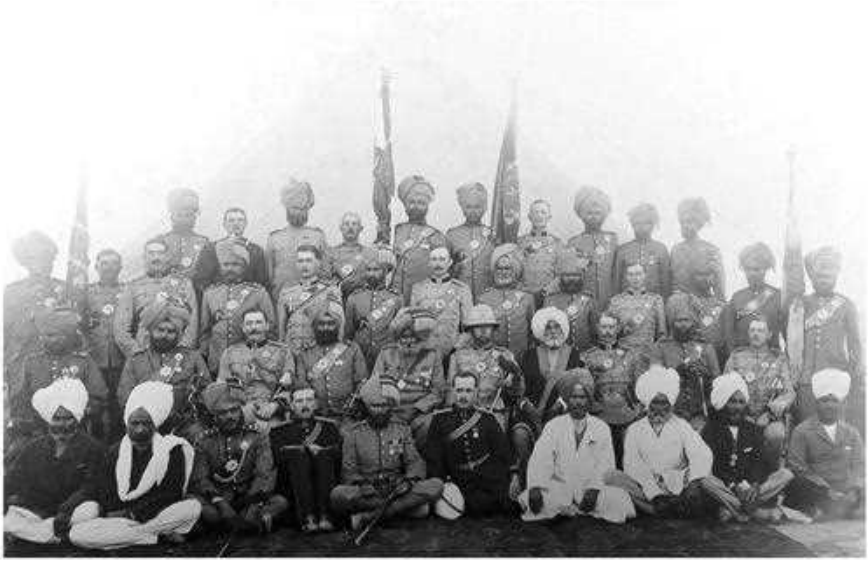
Col GE Weston and officers of 29th Madras Infantry, Bellary 1893.
The officers are dressed in red tunics faced white with black trousers.
The turbans of Indian officers are khaki with white bands.



British and Indian officers, 6th Burma Battalion, Burma 1896.



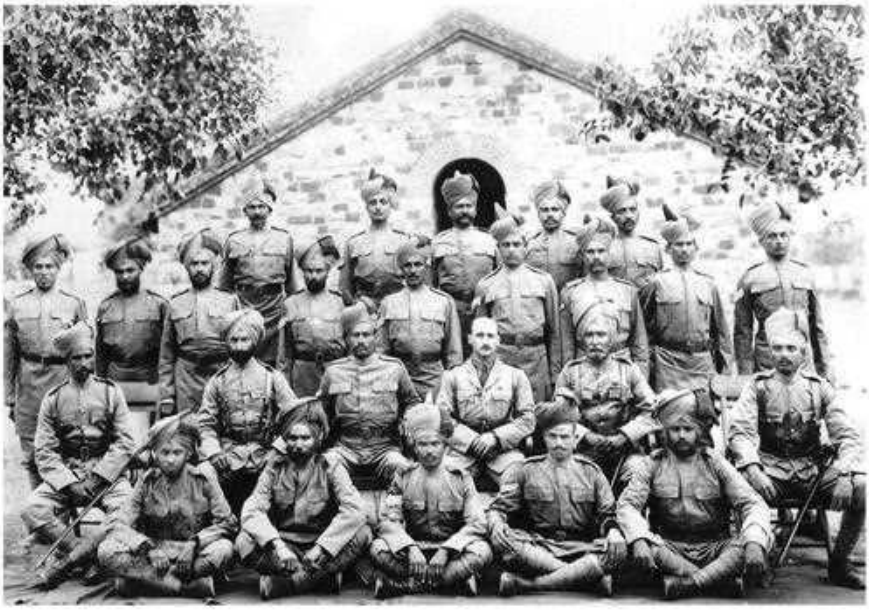
Col CV Mainwaring & officers of 89th Punjabis, Mandalay, Burma 1910.



Lt Col GA Ward with officers and men of 90th Punjabis.
Presentation of new Colours, Delhi, 11 December 1911.
National Army Museum

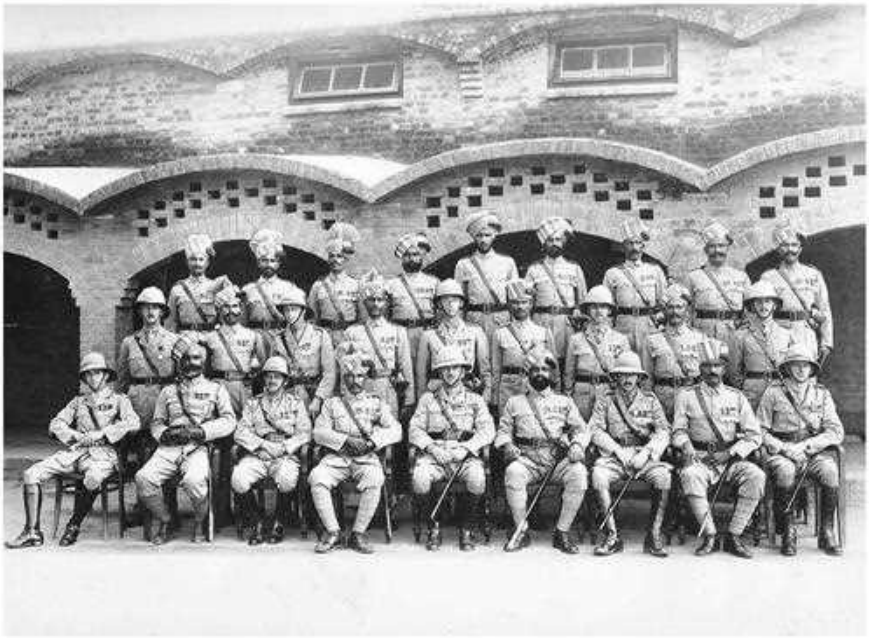
93rd Burma Infantry, France 1915.

Naik Shahamad Khan, VC, 89th Punjabis, manning a Vickers-Maxim .303 machine gun, Mesopotamia 1916.
National Army Museum

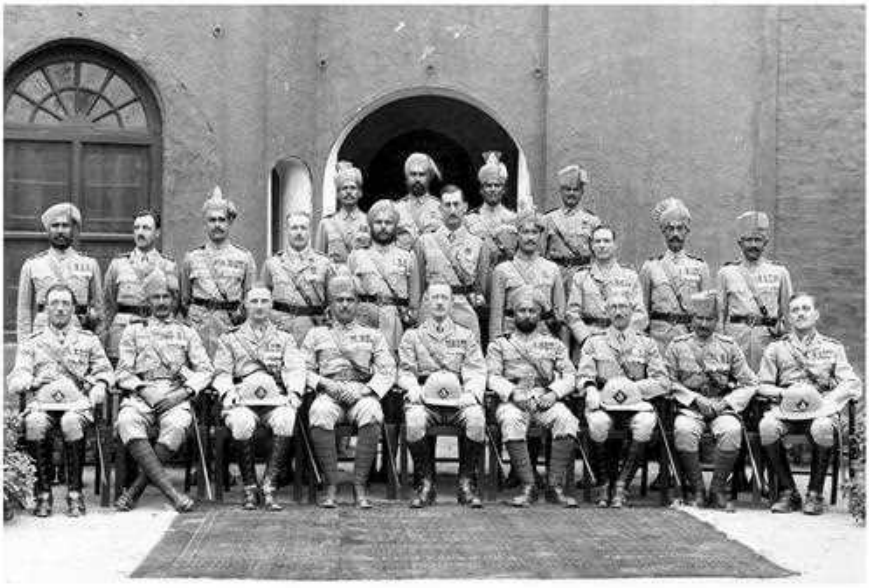


Gallantry award recipients of 1/89th Punjabis with Lt Col NM Geoghegan, Nowshera 1917.
Imperial War Museum

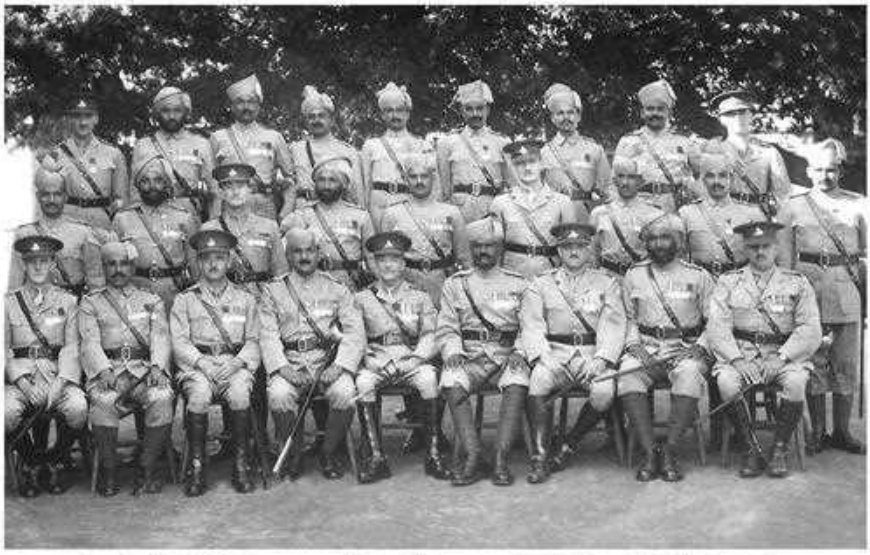
Lt Col H Waring with officers of 1/90th Punjabis, Mesopotamia, January 1919.



Lt Col CE Dease with officers and VCOs of 3/8th Punjab, Lucknow 1925.



Lt Col NHL Watts with officers and VCOs of 10/8th Punjab, Lahore 1933.



Lt Col D St J Baxter with officers and VCOs of 1/8th Punjab,
Hong Kong 1935.

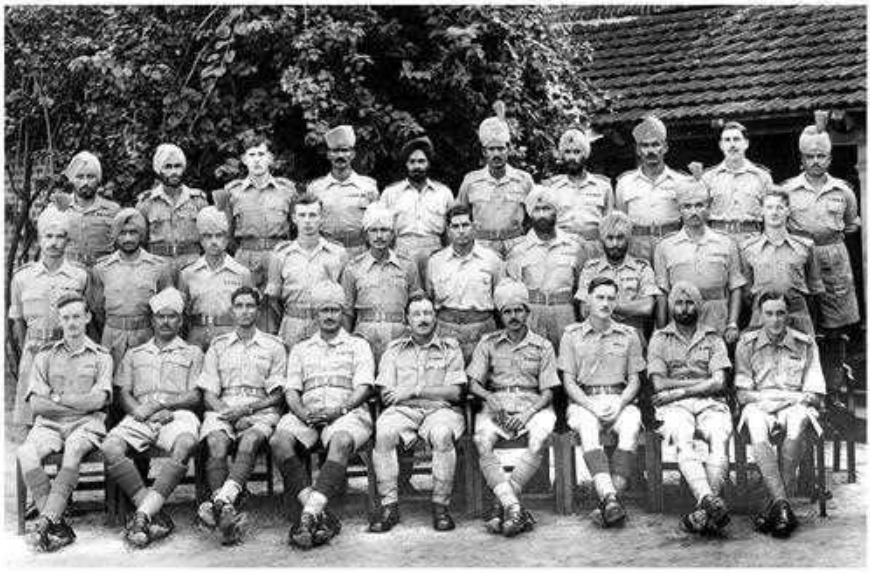
A patrol of 4/8th Punjab, Razmak, North Waziristan 1937.

Hav Parkash Singh, VC, 5/8th Punjab, in a Universal Carrier, Burma 1943.

King George VI inspecting 3/8th Punjab, Italy, 26 July 1944.

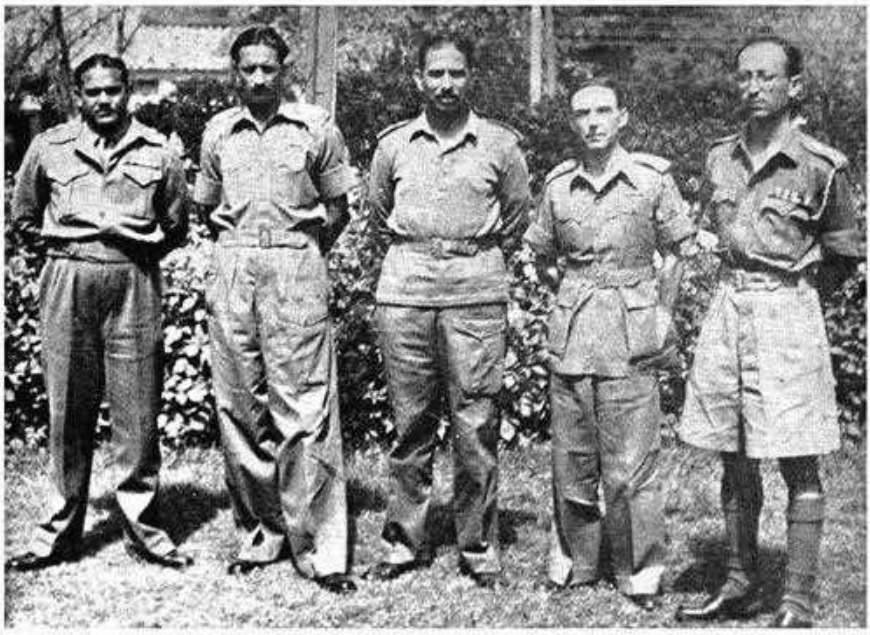
Victoria Cross Parade of Sepoy Kamal Ram, 3/8th Punjab (left).
The Viceroy, Lord Wavell is taking the salute, Delhi, 24 October 1944.

2/8th Punjab marching in Saigon, 26 January 1946.



Lt Col W Gracie with officers & VCOs of 4/8th Punjab, Jubblepore 1946.

Pipe band of 8th Punjab Regimental Centre marching in London, 1946.



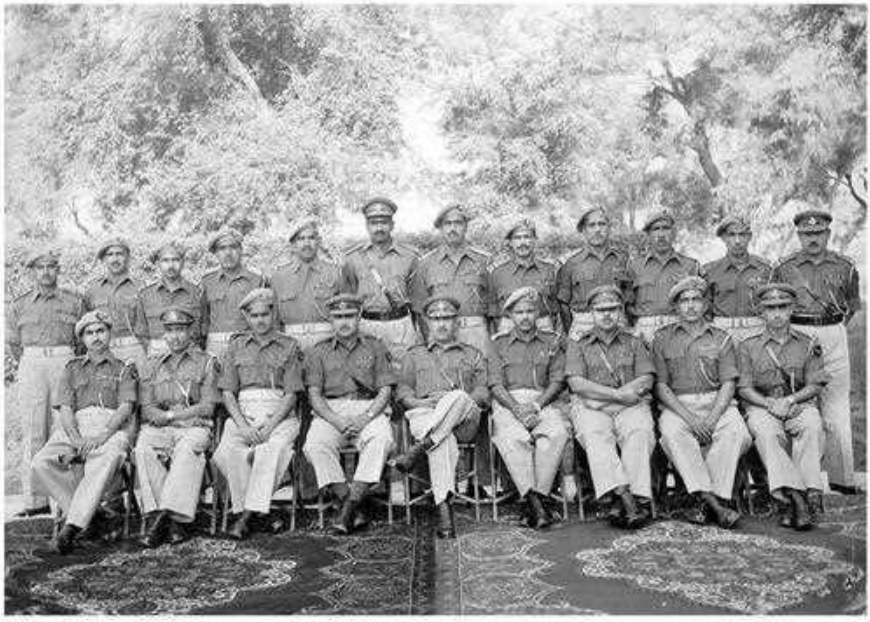
8th Punjab Regiment Commanding Officers' Conference, Lahore 1948.
L to R: Lt Col Nazar (8/8th), Lt Col Sawal (4/8th), Lt Col Kallue (1/8th), Lt Col Baxter (2/8th) and Lt Col Wisal (Regimental Centre).

8th Punjab Regiment contingent marching on Independence Day, Lahore 1948.

Quaid-i-Azam inspecting 3/8th Punjab, Dacca, 19 March 1948.

Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan inspecting the parade at 8th Punjab Regimental Centre, Lahore 1951.

Col Aziz ur Rehman Khan, Centre Commandant, with Commanding Officers, 8th Punjab Regimental Reunion, Quetta 1954.



Officers and JCOs of 3/8th Punjab, Bannu 1956.

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles reviewing the Honour Guard of 6/8th Punjab, Karachi, 7 March 1956.

King Edward VIII
Colonel-in-Chief of 8th Punjab Regiment

General Sir Edward P Quinan
Colonel of 8th Punjab Regiment 1945

Brigadier Fazal-ur-Rahman Kallue
Colonel of 8th Punjab Regiment 1952

Uniforms

Officer's Coatee, 1850
30th Madras Native Infantry.

Patrol Jacket of Maj CH Williams 1905
91st Punjabis (Light Infantry).

Mess Jacket of Lt PR Adams 1935
8th Punjab Regiment.

Officer's Winter Mess Kit 1953
8th Punjab Regiment.

Badges

89th Punjabis

90th Punjabis

91st Punjabis (Light Infantry)

92nd Punjabis

93rd Burma Infantry

8th Punjab Regiment

Subedar Major, 8th Punjab Regiment.
Watercolour by Lance Cattermole, 1937.

10
The Malayan Tragedy

The war for Britain and her allies was not going well. In 1940, the Germans had overrun France, leaving Britain alone to face the German blitz. By 1941, Egypt and the Suez Canal were being threatened by the seemingly unstoppable Rommel and his Afrika Korps. And in the Far East, another threat was looming for which Britain was totally unprepared. Japan had embarked on a quest for an empire encompassing the entire east, and for the last several years, her armies had been waging a savage war of conquest in China. In 1937, she had signed a pact with the Germans, and it was only a matter of time before she turned her attention to the European colonies in Southeast Asia. But as late as 1940, the Japanese threat was considered remote because of the deterrence provided by the American fleet at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii. Following the collapse of France, Japan occupied Haiphong and Hanoi in the French Indochina. The Japanese threat could no longer be ignored and the British started reinforcing their troops in Malaya. In July 1941, the Allies imposed an oil embargo on Japan unless she withdrew her forces from Indochina and China. These were demands that Japan could not accept, but at the same time, the supply of oil from the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) was vital for her survival. War became imminent.

The Malayan Peninsula is about 400 miles long. Its eastern coast is sandy, while the western coast is covered by mangrove swamps. A mountain range covered by dense tropical jungle runs across the middle of the peninsula. On both sides of the range, the land is cultivated, consisting of palm groves, rubber plantations and rice paddies. A major road and railway line connected the north with the south in the western part of the peninsula, but there were few lateral communications.

28. Malaya 1941.

The lynchpin of British defences in Southeast Asia was the Fortress of Singapore. And with the Royal Navy ruling the seas, the fortress was considered impregnable. A land invasion of

Malaya from the north was considered unlikely due to the terrain. By 1940, with the navy committed elsewhere, responsibility for the defence of Malaya passed on to the Royal Air Force. It was estimated that at least 336 modern aircraft would be required to do the job. With this in mind, the British built a number of airfields scattered all over Malaya. But the pressures of other theatres of war meant that in 1941, there were only 158 obsolescent aircraft in Malaya. The Army's mission was to protect these airfields and to deny them to the enemy. However, the Army itself was in a poor shape. It had no tanks because it was believed that tanks could not operate in Malaya. There were no mobile anti-aircraft guns, and the Army was totally road-dependant due to the absence of animal transport. There was no proper signal organization. The troops were not trained in jungle warfare and most of the battalions were handicapped due to a shortage of experienced officers and men, who had been milked to raise new battalions in India.[1]

When war broke out in 1939, 1/8th Punjab was stationed at Lucknow, where it had arrived in 1937, after more than three years in Hong Kong. After spending several months on internal security duty in Orissa, the battalion moved to Poona in August 1940, where the 6th Indian Brigade was mobilizing for service overseas. The battalion lost 180 officers and men, who were transferred to the newly raised 6th and 7th Battalions. In return, 240 reservists and recruits were posted in. The battalion remained engaged in strenuous training for desert warfare, and it was expected that it would head for North Africa. However, in October, the battalion was ordered to change the desert camouflage of its vehicles to jungle camouflage. On 20 October, the battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Lovat Fraser, embarked at Bombay for Penang in North Malaya.[2]

On arrival in Malaya, 1/8th Punjab was sent to Sungei Patani, while the rest of the brigade was based at Ipoh. In December, two companies were sent north to guard Alor Star

airbase. In January 1941, the 6th Brigade moved to a camp in a rubber plantation at Tanjong Pau, about ten miles north of Alor Star. At this time, Lieutenant Colonel RCS Bates took over command of the battalion. The next eleven months were spent in training. However, due to the absence of any guidelines from higher headquarters, the training was largely self-devised and often disrupted due to frequent changes in war plans. A great deal of time was spent in assimilating new weapons for which ammunition was always in short supply. During this period, the battalion had to furnish a further draft of men for the 8th and 9th Battalions, receiving in return another batch of recruits.[3]

By early December, it had become obvious that a Japanese attack on Malaya was imminent. However, the exact place was uncertain. Lieutenant General AE Percival, GOC Malaya Command, had disposed his forces to cover every eventuality. The defence of North Malaya was entrusted to III Indian Corps under Lieutenant General LM Heath, with 11th Indian Division (6th and 15th Brigades) deployed in the northwest, and 9th Indian Division (8th and 22nd Brigades) guarding the airfields and beaches in the east. The 28th Indian Brigade was in corps reserve, while the 12th Indian Brigade was in command reserve. The two brigades of 8th Australian Division were responsible for the defence of Johore in southern Malaya, while a garrison of two Malay brigades was assigned to Singapore.[4]

The likeliest places for Japanese landings were Kota Bahru on the northeast coast of Malaya and the ports of Singora and Patani in Siam (Thailand). The British war plan, code named 'Matador', envisaged a pre-emptive strike inside Siam by 11th Division to capture Singora as soon as the Japanese made any hostile move towards Malaya. It was to be accompanied by a simultaneous advance by a force of two battalions, the 'Krohcol', to capture a stretch of the Kroh-Patani Road inside Siam in order to protect the right flank of 11th Division. However, a rapid advance

inside a potentially hostile country, towards an objective fifty miles away, without adequate forces, left too much to chance, making Matador a doubtful proposition. In case Matador was not implemented, 11th Division was to immediately revert to a defensive role and occupy the position of Jitra, about ten mile north of Alor Star airbase.[5]

The Japanese plan of war was to launch simultaneous strikes against Pearl Harbour, Hong Kong and Malaya on the night 7/8 December 1941. The invasion of Malaya was entrusted to the Twenty-fifth Japanese Army under General Yamashita. His plan was to land a brigade-size force at Kota Bahru to seize the airfield there, while his main strike force was to capture Singora and Patani. While the main column advanced south from Singora towards Jitra, another column was to move towards Kroh from Patani to cut off British line of communication.[6] For the task at hand, Yamashita had three divisions: the 5th, 18th and the Imperial Guards. These were veteran troops, who were well-equipped and had received intensive training in jungle warfare. And they had tanks—more than two hundred of them.[7] They also had the support of a large and competent air force.

Japanese tactics in Malaya were to attack a position headlong with a column of tanks and motorized infantry in an effort to breakthrough. If they were blocked, they would immediately outflank the position. The tactics worked with devastating effect against the poorly trained and equipped British forces. The British were further handicapped by their self-imposed compulsion to defend the airbases, which not only dispersed their forces, but also tied them down to tactically unsound defensive positions. This meant that the initiative remained with the Japanese throughout, and they could concentrate their forces at the point of decision, while the British could not.[8]

By 4 December, the British were aware that a Japanese invasion fleet had sailed, but its destination was still not clear. The

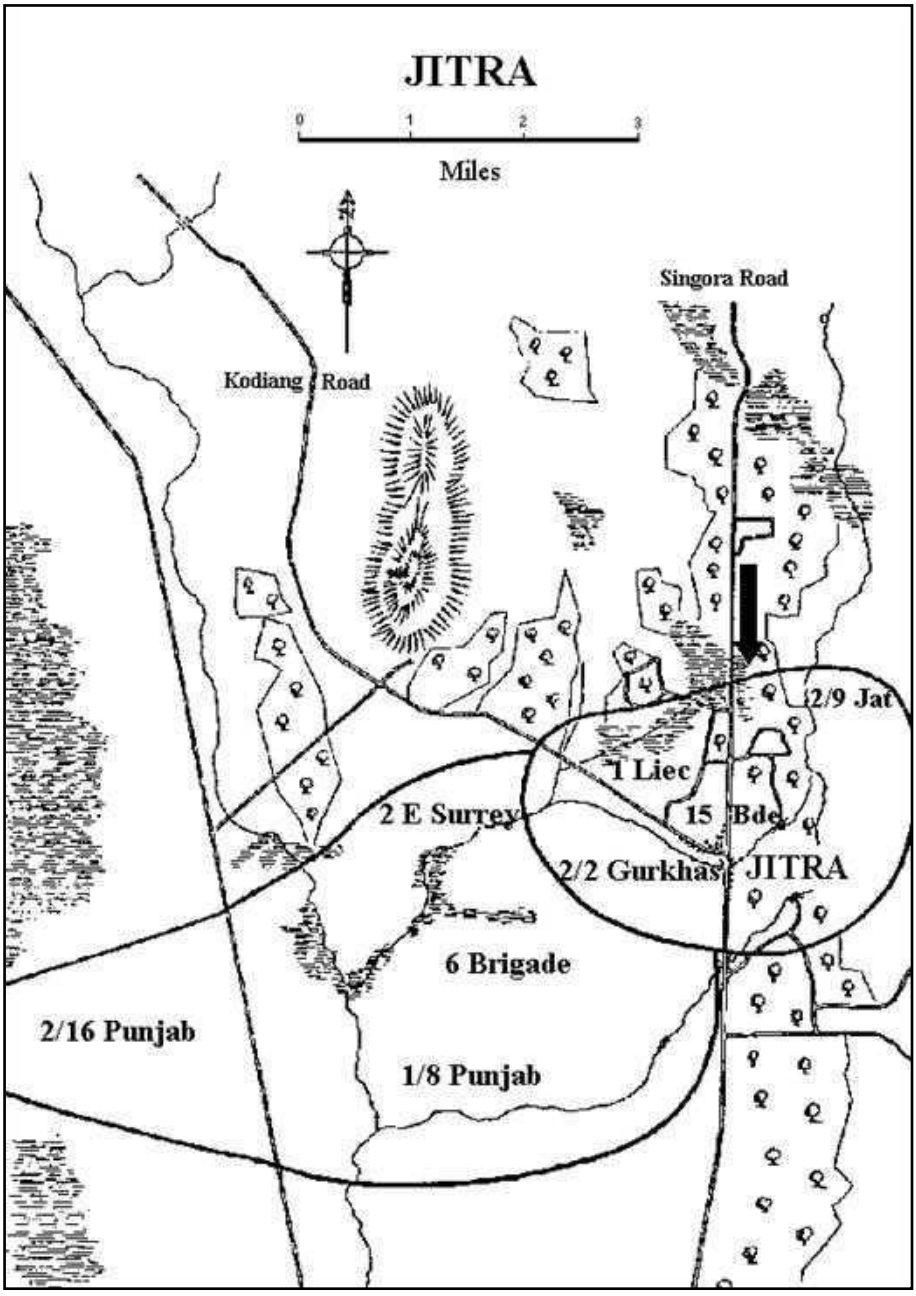
11th Division, which had been on alert for Matador since 28 November, was put on four hours' notice. But then, the British lost track of the invasion fleet and on the night of 7 December, the Japanese were able to land at Singora and Patani unopposed. In the meantime, the 11th Division was kept standing by in pouring rain, now on half an hour's notice. The Japanese landing at Kota Bahru was fiercely resisted by 8th Brigade, but in the end, they had to give way. The orders for Krohcol to move were delayed for several critical hours and by the time it reached its objective, the Japanese were already there. Within the first 48 hours of the war, the RAF was knocked out of action and the Japanese gained complete air superiority. On 10 December, the British Eastern Fleet also ceased to exist, when the battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* and the battle cruiser *HMS Repulse* were sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers.[9] With both Navy and Air Force out of the war, the fate of Malaya now rested with the Army.

The Battle of Jitra: By the time orders were given for cancellation of Matador at 1300 hours on 8 December, the Japanese already had a head start of thirteen hours. Asking a formation keyed up to go on the offensive to switch immediately to the defensive resulted in serious logistical and morale problems. The equipment and stores had to be brought back, the entire disposition of the formation reorganized and defences prepared. Jitra was a poor defensive position to begin with. It had been forced upon 11th Division because of the need to protect the airfields in its rear. It was vulnerable to a flanking move by the enemy from the Kroh-Patani Road and its defences had been neglected by an operational staff focused on Matador. The troops, who had been waiting to attack for days, were shocked and demoralized by the new orders. Already exhausted by hours of waiting in the rain, they had to start work on preparing the incomplete and waterlogged defences.[10] The delay in conveying the new orders proved to be fatal, as the division was still off

balance, when on 11 December, it was attacked by the Japanese advanced guard.

The Jitra position consisted of "defended localities and concrete machine-gun emplacements protected by barbed wire". It was covered by an anti-tank ditch, which was still under construction. The position was defended by 15th Brigade on the right and 6th Brigade on the left, with 28th Brigade in reserve. The 15th Brigade front was held by 2/9th Jat and 1st Leicestershire. It stretched for 6000 yards from jungle-clad hills on the right, through rice paddy fields and rubber plantations to the Kodiang road. The 6th Brigade front, held by 2nd East Surrey and 2/16th Punjab extended 18000 yards from the road to the sea, and was mostly rice paddies on the right and swamp on the left.[11] 1/14th and 1/8th Punjab were the reserve battalions of 15th and 6th Brigades respectively. The division had the support of five batteries of artillery and an under-strength anti-tank regiment. The Jitra Plan called for delaying actions beginning at the frontier and 1/14th Punjab was detailed for the task on the main Singora road. The railway line and Kodiang road were the responsibility of 6th Brigade, with 2/16th Punjab and 1/8th Punjab providing the forward outposts. [12]

On 8 December, while the rest of the division was getting organized, a mechanized column consisting of two companies and the carrier platoon of 1/8th Punjab, one section of anti-tank guns and two sections of engineers, was ordered to cross the frontier and harass and delay the enemy. The column was commanded by Major ER Andrews, the Second-in-Command of 1/8th Punjab, whose orders were "not to become inextricably involved". The rest of the battalion was deployed on an outpost line on the Kodiang road. The column moved on the Singora road and crossing the frontier at 1730 hours, arrived at the village of Ban Sadao, ten miles inside Siam at 1815 hours. Major Andrews deployed his force in a semicircle around the village. Ahead of this position, the



29. The Battle of Jitra, 12 December 1941.

Bren gun carriers were placed off the road, covering the anti-tank guns, which were sited to shoot down the road.[13]

At about 2000 hours, lights of the Japanese convoy of about 35 vehicles were seen. The mechanized column was the advanced guard of 5th Japanese Division and consisted of a mixed force of about 3000 men with artillery and twelve tanks. At 2115 hours, when the column was forty yards away, the anti-tank guns opened fire, and the lead tank was hit. Soon, two more tanks were hit and destroyed. At the same time, the carriers opened up an intense fire on the lorries carrying the troops. The Japanese were completely surprised and suffered heavy casualties. But they recovered quickly, and supported by mortars, started working around the Punjabis' flanks. Two carriers of 1/8th Punjab were hit and destroyed by mortar fire. Major Andrews' little force had given a sharp welcome to the Japanese, but it was in no position to engage in a prolonged firefight with a much stronger force. At 2230 hours, he ordered his two companies to withdraw to the south of the village, where their lorries were waiting.

In the meantime, the anti-tank guns and the carriers continued to fire until 2300 hours, when they too withdrew. The withdrawal was carried out just in time, as the Japanese had already worked their way in the rear of the carriers, who had to drive through three parties of the enemy to get clear. Meanwhile, the engineers had placed demolition charges on three bridges, which were blown up as the force withdrew towards Jitra. The Japanese did not follow up. 1/8th Punjabis crossed the frontier at 0130 hours, where 1/14th Punjab had arrived to take up position. The total casualties during the action were three men killed, one missing and 14 wounded.[14]

On 11 December, the Japanese attacked the forward defensive position at Changlun held by 1/14th Punjab. The battalion was ordered to withdraw to a position in front of Asun, which was defended by 2/1st Gurkha Rifles of the 28th Brigade. As

1/14th Punjab was withdrawing in heavy rain, a Japanese column led by tanks charged through the battalion and a company of the Gurkhas, which was covering the withdrawal. The tank column was finally halted at Asun by anti-tank guns, but the Japanese infantry immediately started infiltrating into the Asun position. By evening, both battalions had been completely overrun.[15]

In the meantime, on the 6th Brigade front, the two forward companies of 2/16th Punjab and the outposts of 1/8th Punjab were ordered to withdraw towards the main Jitra position. As their column approached the causeway at Manggoi in late evening, the Royal Engineers officer in charge of the demolition panicked and blew up the causeway. This stranded the column, which consisted of a mountain battery and seven anti-tank guns, besides the two companies of 2/16th Punjab with their transport and all the carriers and half the trucks of 1/8th Punjab. The troops were ordered to abandon the vehicles with their loads and move to the rear, as it was believed that the causeway would be repaired later. It never was. The loss of the equipment was a serious blow, as none of it could be replaced.[16]

Early in the evening of 11 December, the Japanese established contact with 2/9th Jat and started probing their right flank. Soon, Japanese tanks were on the move again. At 2030 hours, they charged down Singora road towards the centre of the main position in front of 1st Leicestershire but were halted by anti-tank guns. The 15th Brigade Commander asked for reinforcements from 6th Brigade, who placed two companies each of 1/8th and 2/16th Punjab at his disposal. During the night and early morning, the Japanese launched several frontal attacks on the main position, and at 0600 hours on 12 December, overran part of the left forward company of the Jats. They had succeeded in penetrating the British line east of the road on the boundary between the Jats and the Leicesters and were occupying a strong position in a copse of trees. After a counterattack failed to dislodge

them, 15th Brigade again requested for assistance from 6th Brigade, and received the rest of 1/8th Punjab.[17]

The situation in the area was becoming critical and the Jats were unsteady. The 15th Brigade Commander ordered Lieutenant Colonel Bates, the Commandant of 1/8th Punjab, to counterattack and regain the lost ground. The counterattack, to be carried out by two companies, was planned for 0830 hours on 12 December. As the C and D Companies of 1/8th Punjab were moving into position, the Jats, mistaking them for the Japanese, opened heavy fire at close range. As a result, the battalion suffered serious casualties, and the attack was delayed until 1000 hours.

After regrouping, Colonel Bates himself led the attack along with Captain CJC Alabaster, the Adjutant and Captain MI Jennings, the Officer Commanding D Company. There was no artillery support or covering fire and the carriers of 2/9th Jat, which were to accompany 1/8th Punjabis, got bogged down and could not advance. As soon as the Punjabis broke cover, they ran into heavy machine gun and mortar fire. All three officers were killed. However, the charge was gallantly carried out and succeeded in reaching the support positions of the Jat Company, which had been overrun earlier. Casualties were heavy, including 28 killed, and the attack could not proceed further. The survivors stayed where they were throughout the day. Some tried to recover the body of their colonel, but were all killed.[18]

Throughout 12 December, intense fighting took place as the Japanese launched repeated attacks all along the front. The Jats were badly mauled, and by 1500 hours, there was a big gap in the front between them and the Leicesters. The Japanese started infiltrating into this gap but were checked by a company of 1/8th Punjab sent forward by 15th Brigade Commander. 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles from 28th Brigade were trying to hold the enemy in the centre, but there was still a gap of a mile and a half between them and 2/9th Jat. A Company of 1/8th Punjab was

ordered to extend the right flank of the Gurkhas and link up with the Jats; but this was impossible and their own right flank became exposed. The company was subjected to heavy mortar fire but luckily did not suffer many casualties.[19]

By now, the situation of 11th Division was untenable. The Japanese were unrelenting in attacks, and their armour was massing for another charge down the road. The British troops were exhausted after two days of fighting in heavy rain with hardly any sleep or food. Their communications had broken down, they were running out of ammunition, and their casualties were heavy. There were no reserves. And there was the danger of being cut off in the rear by the Japanese force advancing towards Kroh from Patani. Late in the evening, orders were issued for withdrawal of the division to the south of Alor Star, preparatory to occupation of the Gurun position. During the night, the division was able to withdraw, mostly cross-country in heavy rain and without any major interference from the Japanese. However, in the process, much heavy equipment, guns and vehicles were lost, as they got bogged down in the mud and had to be abandoned.[20]

1/8th Punjab, now commanded by Major Andrews, was ordered to withdraw to Kepala Batas at 2200 hours and hold the river crossing. The depleted C and D Companies had been amalgamated to form a single 'CD' Company. A Company under Captain Finlayson was temporarily left with 28th Brigade. The battalion reached its objective at midnight and was joined by A Company at 0430 hours on 13 December. The company had been acting as the rear party of 28th Brigade and was almost cut off by Japanese advance down the main road but managed to extricate itself. At 0500 hours, the withdrawal was continued to Alor Star, which was reached at 0900 hours. The troops were hungry and exhausted after twenty-four hours of continuous action, and the battalion was given permission to rest, about 400 yards south of the river. Subedar Major Arjan Singh volunteered to go to a Gurdwara

across the river to obtain tea and food for the men. On his second trip, he was caught up in a Japanese attack and was severely wounded in the abdomen. The wounded VCO was captured by the enemy, who threw him in the river to drown. Loss of the Subedar Major at this critical juncture was a further blow to the already battered battalion.[21]

At 1030 hours on 13 December, the battalion resumed its withdrawal towards Sampang Ampat, six miles south of Alor Star, where it halted for the night to hold an outpost position on the main road. *En route*, it encountered some trouble from Japanese snipers, who had infiltrated into the area. One of these was captured and sent to the Brigade Headquarters but was "dealt with by his escort on the way". During the night, the rearguard of the division passed through and at 0800 hours on 14 December, the battalion withdrew towards Gurun after breaking contact with the advanced elements of the enemy.[22]

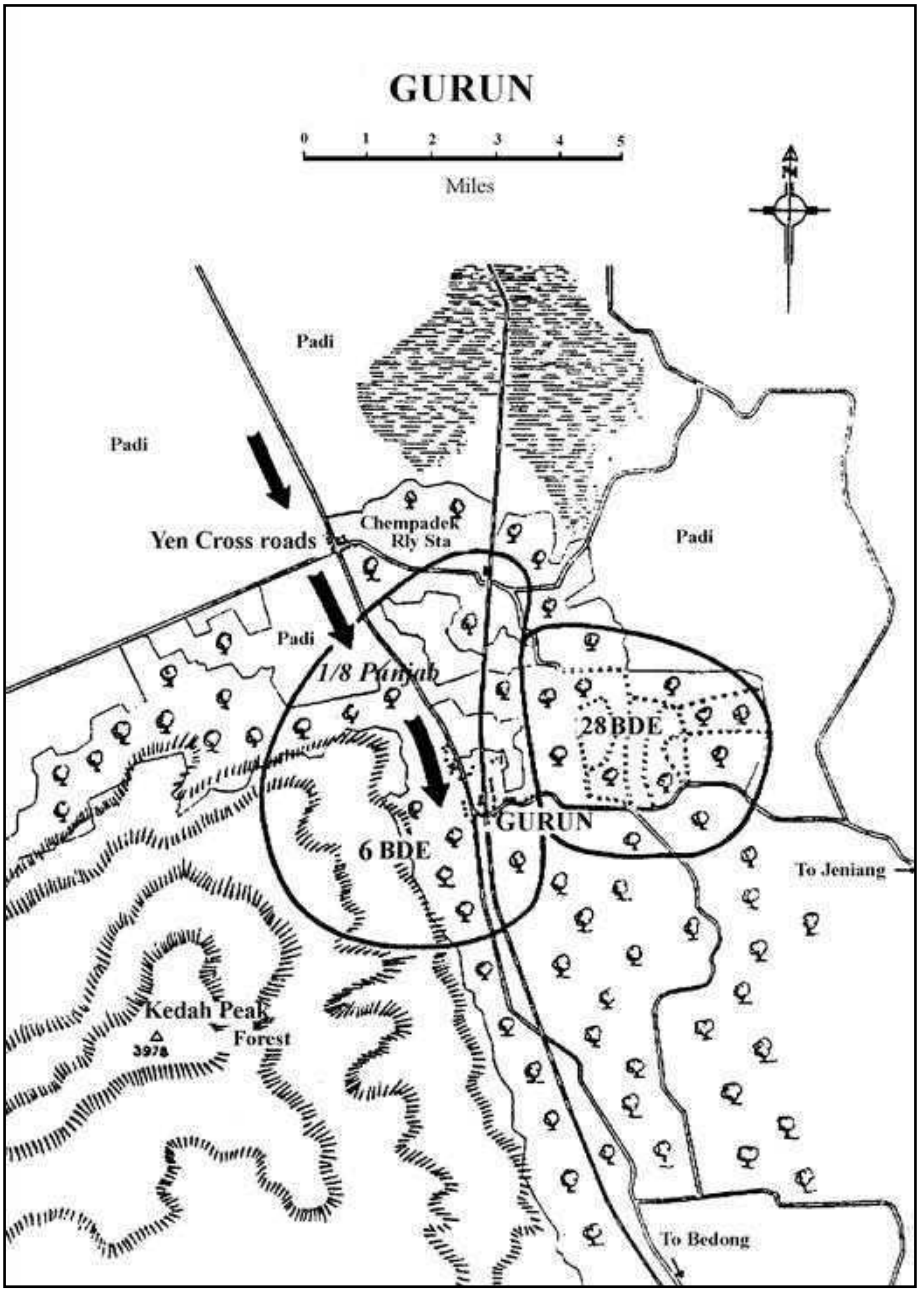
The defeat at Jitra was an absolute disaster. The 11th Division had been thoroughly beaten and driven out from its prepared defensive position in less than two days by a Japanese force of no more than a brigade. It had suffered heavy casualties and its morale was shattered. "By the time the withdrawal from Jitra was finished the 11th Indian Division was a shadow of itself". It "needed rest as few troops have needed rest". But, "there were no troops to relieve it".[23]

The Battle of Gurun: Gurun was a good defensive position, but unfortunately, had not been prepared adequately. The position was astride the main road and railway line about three miles north of the village of Gurun. It extended from just north of the 4000-foot-high Kedah Peak on the left, to rubber plantations on the right. The road from Yen on the coast crossed the main road in front of the position at Guar Chempadek. The 6th Brigade front extended from the Kedah Peak to the railway line, from where the 28th Brigade took over. The much-depleted 15th Brigade was in reserve. The

artillery was placed in the valleys and on hilltops. 1/8th Punjab, "probably the most tired battalion of a weary brigade", held the left flank and the main road. CD Company was astride the road while B Company was on its left, with a platoon of A Company filling the gap between the two. Rest of the A was in support of B on some low foothills, and one company of 2nd East Surrey under command 1/8th Punjab, was supporting CD Company. Two companies of 2nd East Surrey were holding the area between the road and the railway line.[24]

The British had little time to prepare their defences. By the time 1/8th Punjab reached Gurun around noon on 14 December, Japanese and British patrols were already in contact at the Yen crossroads. The Japanese had moved with astonishing speed. At 1400 hours, supported by air force and led by three tanks, eleven lorries filled with Japanese infantry advanced towards Gurun. By 1600 hours, 1/8th Punjab was under heavy attack. Casualties in the battalion started mounting, especially in CD Company, where the Company Commander, Lieutenant Ghulam Akbar was badly wounded and had to be evacuated. As the right flank started to give way, the 6th Brigade Commander led a counterattack with a mixed force, which included men from 1/8th Punjab, and was able to clear the area of Japanese infiltrators up to milestone 20. Soon after dark, the enemy fire became heavy and all communication with the brigade was severed. The Japanese started infiltrating around the right flank of CD Company, which was subjected to intense fire and suffered heavy casualties. By 0300 hours on 15 December, the company had been completely overrun.[25]

At 0400 hours on 15 December, the Adjutant of 2nd East Surrey arrived at 1/8th Punjab with a request for reinforcements. He informed Major Andrews that he had seen two battalions of Japanese infantry pass round and behind the right flank of the battalion. At 0500 hours, shells from British artillery began falling into the battalion area. The remnants of CD Company were



30. The Battle of Gurun, 14-15 December 1941.

ordered to withdraw, but only twelve survivors were able to make it. By daylight, the battalion's situation was critical: the enemy was present in the battalion's rear; casualties were mounting and could not be evacuated; troops were down to ten rounds of ammunition per man; contact could not be established with 2nd East Surrey on the right; there was no communication with the brigade; and they were being shelled by their own artillery. Considering all these factors, Major Andrews assumed that the 2nd East Surrey had been overrun and he was completely isolated. He decided to withdraw into the jungle towards the west, and then moving southwards, rejoin the division at Sungei Patani. Accordingly, the battalion along with C Company of 2nd East Surrey left its position at 0600 hours. The 2nd East Surrey having been overrun a little earlier, the main line of advance now lay open to the Japanese.[26]

At 0700 hour on 15 December, the Japanese broke into the Brigade Headquarters in the village of Gurun, killing everyone, including Captain FA Giles of 1/8th Punjab, who was acting as the Staff Captain. Second Lieutenant Abdullah Khan, the battalion Liaison Officer was mortally wounded and died the next day. The only survivors were the Brigade Commander and the Head Clerk, who was away at the time. Troops from 28th and 15th Brigades were able to hold the Japanese around Gurun, but the situation of 11th Division was now hopeless. The Division Commander therefore decided to withdraw the remnants of his division south of the Muda River. The Japanese, who had suffered considerable losses, did not follow up and by the morning of 16 December, the division was across the river.[27]

In the meantime, 1/8th Punjab continued its withdrawal towards Sungei Patani. The going was extremely tough for the battalion, as it tried to cut its way through long stretches of dense jungle in pouring rain. During the move, the rear part of the column under Lieutenant MHC Burns—mainly HQ C Company and part of A Company, lost touch with the battalion. They crossed

the Muda on 16 December and eventually made contact with the division on 18 December. Rest of the battalion reached the mouth of River Muda on 17 December, only to find that the Japanese had taken Sungei Patani. The battalion then hired Malay *sampans* to transport them to the island fortress of Penang, where they arrived in late afternoon. But the British had evacuated the island during the previous night, and no vessels could be found to transport the exhausted men to safety. Only one boat was obtained in which Captain Finlayson and three East Surrey officers left to look for help from the Royal Navy. They reached Port Swettenham a few days later, but by then, the Japanese had landed on Penang. On 19 December, remnants of the battalion under Major Andrews were taken prisoner. Lieutenant AGG Williamson managed to escape in a boat and landed on the mainland five days later. He had suffered so badly from exposure and sunburn that he had to spend the rest of the campaign in hospital. Captain Finlayson was sent to run a new jungle warfare school and was only able to rejoin the battalion on 13 February on Singapore Island.[28]

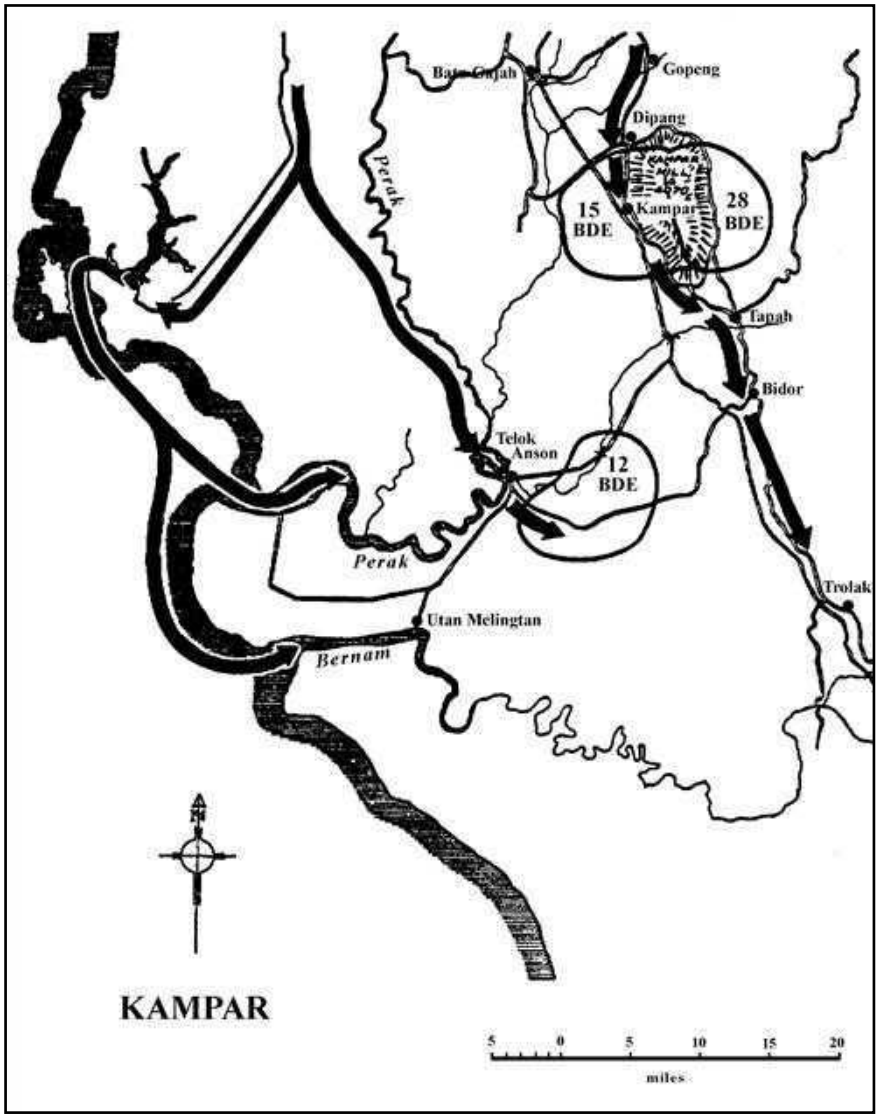
The Japanese directed their thrust eastwards from Sungei Patani in an effort to bypass the 11th Division. As a result, the division was forced to withdraw south of River Krian. The remnants of 6th and 15th Brigades moved to Taiping and then to Ipoh, where on 18 December, the two brigades were merged to form the 6/15th Indian Brigade. At Taiping, the survivors of 1/8th Punjab were joined by a number of men who had been away on odd jobs, and it was possible to muster two rifle companies: one of Gujars and Sikhs, and the other of Punjabi Muslims, besides a small proportion of HQ Company. These were amalgamated with the equally shattered 2/9th Jat to form the 1st Indian Infantry Battalion; also known as the Jat/Punjab Battalion.[29]

The Battle of Kampar: The Japanese advance continued to push back the British along both the coasts. On 23 December, Taiping was taken and on 27 December, the British abandoned Ipoh. In the

meantime, British reinforcements including two Indian brigades and a British division were on their way to Malaya. These were due to arrive in mid-January, and it was considered vital to delay the Japanese advance as long as possible. The British decided to make their next stand at Kampar in Central Malaya. The 6/15th Brigade was despatched to Kampar on 23 December to prepare the defences, while 12th and 28th Brigades fought a delaying action. The Kampar position, about twenty miles south of Ipoh lay on either side of a 4000-foot-high jungle-clad hill, nine miles long and six miles wide. The main road passed through the village of Kampar on the western edge of the hill, while a by-pass road went through Sahum towards the east of the hill. It was a strong position, with open tin mining area to the north and west, offering a good field of fire. The position could only be turned from Telok Anson if the enemy could transport troops by sea or down the Perak River.

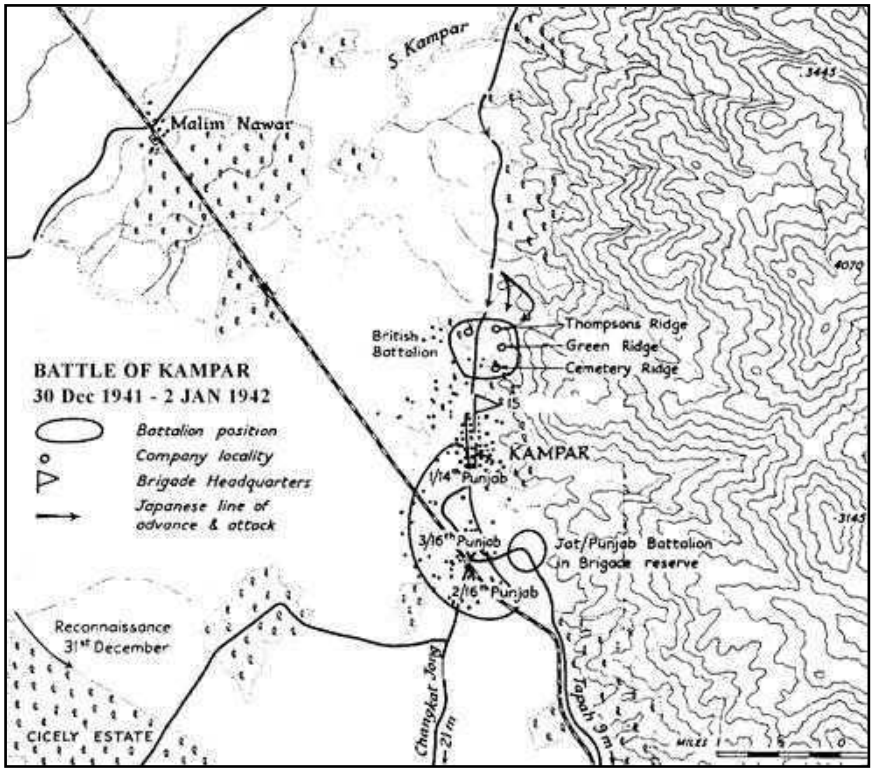
The main position was held by 6/15th Brigade, which was deployed in a semi-circle on a frontage of four miles, with its back towards the hill. The composite British Battalion (1st Leicester and 2nd East Surrey) was holding the northern face of the perimeter and the composite Indian or Jat/Punjab Battalion (1/8th Punjab and 2/9th Jat) the southern face. The rest of the brigade covered the western face. The 28th Brigade was holding the Sahum by-pass, while 12th Brigade was in divisional reserve at Bidori. Small detachments were watching the approaches to Telok Anson. The 6/15th Brigade had spent a week preparing the position in constant rain; digging gun pits, clearing field of fire and putting up wire entanglements.[30] With a division of fresh troops and some air support, the Kampar position would have been formidable. But these were luxuries not available to the beleaguered British commanders.

By 30 December, the Japanese were probing British defences both at Sahum and along the main Kampar position. The



31. Japanese Attack on Kampar.

next day, Japanese troops were observed on the coast, while several vessels were seen transporting troops by sea. The 12th Brigade was moved to counter this new threat. On 1 January 1942, the Japanese launched a major attack on the



32. The Kampar Position.

British Battalion at Kampar. Despite repeated attacks, the Japanese were unable to make any headway except for a toehold on Thompson's Ridge on the extreme right, to which they tenaciously hung on. Meanwhile on the coast, the Japanese had started landing in force at Utan Melintang.[31]

On 2 January, the Japanese renewed their attack on the Kampar position, and despite some gallant resistance by the British Battalion, succeeded in penetrating as far south as Green Ridge. The right flank of the British Battalion was now dangerously exposed, and the Japanese were in a position to enfilade the British troops on the lower ground. A Jat company of the 1st Indian Battalion was ordered to counterattack and restore the situation,

but the attack failed. Another counterattack was ordered, this time by A Company of 1/8th Punjab. Their objective was to reinforce Green Ridge and drive out the Japanese from their positions on Thompson's Ridge. The attack was to be led by Captain JO Graham of 1/8th Punjab, who was Second-in-Command of the 1st Indian Battalion, and Lieutenant CD Lamb, the Company Commander.[32]

Before the attack, Captain Graham addressed the men and emphasized that the honour of the Regiment depended upon their conduct. The assault had to traverse about 250 yards of open ground. The enemy held his fire until the company was within thirty yards and then opened a "storm of fire". Lieutenant Lamb and many sepoys were killed almost at once.[33] But led by the gallant Captain Graham, the 8th Punjabis continued the charge "in the old traditional style … through a tremendous barrage of mortar and machine-gun fire".[34] "The first Japanese line was carried at bayonet's point and the company paused … having suffered very severe casualties".[35] Captain Graham urged his men on and the second line was taken from the Japanese Imperial Guards. Here, Captain Graham was mortally wounded when a mortar bomb blew off both his legs below the knee. But he continued to encourage his men until he collapsed from loss of blood. Only thirty men were left in the company, which was now led by Jemadar Vir Singh.[36] The men attacked the third line and "their cheering rose to a roar as they charged, routing the enemy with heavy loss".[37] Jemadar Vir Singh led his men gallantly until he too fell, badly wounded. The company finally ran into concealed Dannert wire, but the survivors hung on until ordered to withdraw at night.[38]

Captain JO Graham died of his wounds 48 hours later. His last words, as he was being carried away from the battlefield were, "Was the attack successful?" He was recommended for the Victoria Cross but instead, was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Jemadar Vir Singh was awarded the Military Cross

for his heroic conduct. Numerous other acts of bravery were carried out by the 8th Punjabis. One of them was by Sepoy Suba Singh, a runner, who was twice sent to the nearest British company under heavy enemy fire to telephone Battalion Headquarters. While returning from his second trip, he was seriously wounded in three places including the pelvis. The gallant sepoy insisted on crawling back to the company with the reply. He was killed while attempting a third trip.[39]

Meanwhile, the other company of 1/8th Punjab was sent to strengthen the front of 1/14th Punjab at Malim Nawar ferry. The company was attacked by the Japanese and suffered several casualties. Detachments of the two battalions were withdrawn due to their dangerously isolated position.[40] In the meantime, Japanese forces moving inland from Utan Melintang reached Telok Anson, and there were reports of Japanese activity near Kuala Selangor, forty-five miles south of River Bernam. The Kampar position had been turned, and the British had no option but to retreat. During the night of 2 January, the 11th Division started withdrawing to its new defensive line on River Slim.[41]

Japanese attempts to land at Kuala Selangor led to the despatch of 1st Indian Battalion to reinforce a hastily gathered coastal defence force. The 6/15th Brigade soon followed, while the rest of 11th Division occupied the Slim River position. On 5 January, the Japanese repeated the tactics employed at Jitra, and in a bold attack using tank columns, annihilated 12th and 28th Brigades. Meanwhile, 6/15th Brigade was engaged in a hopeless effort to prevent Japanese landings on a wide area of the western coast. By 9 January, large number of Japanese troops had landed on the coast, and it was decided to withdraw III Indian Corps to Johore. The 11th Division was ordered to hold Kuala Lumpur until midnight of 10 January and then fall back towards Seremban.[42]

A small force consisting of the 1st Indian Battalion, 3rd Cavalry and a battalion of Federated Malay States Volunteer Force was deployed north of Klang, covering the bridge over the river. On 10 January, the Japanese attacked the position but were repulsed. During the evening, the force disengaged from the enemy and started to withdraw towards Batu Tiga. As the force was retiring, the Japanese succeeded in outflanking it and cutting the road. Most of the 8th Punjabis were in the rear of the column, and led by their VCOs, about 200 men were able to escape into the jungle. After a difficult march, these men rejoined British forces the next day. Others were not so lucky and about forty men with Lieutenant Burns were captured. Two sections of Punjabi Muslims put up a stiff fight; only surrendering when half of them had been killed. They were executed by the Japanese in cold blood after their capture.[43]

By 14 January, III Indian Corps had completed its withdrawal to Johore. Its place on the frontline was taken over by the 8th Australian Division and the newly arrived 45th Indian Brigade. The British now planned to hold the Japanese advance on the Muar-Gemis-Endau line in northern Johore. As the Japanese resumed their advance, they were dealt several sharp reverses by the Australians on the central front. But the Japanese were able to outflank 45th Indian Brigade on the Muar River. In a week of intense fighting, the brigade was completely annihilated.

The British were again forced to fall back, this time to the line Batu Pahat-Kluang-Mersing. The Battle of Muar was a decisive blow by the Japanese, and the British had no option but to disengage and retreat towards Singapore. During this period, the 6/15th Brigade was held in reserve at Kluang, and the remnants of 1/8th Punjab were deployed on guard duty at the aerodrome.[44] On 22 January, they were withdrawn from Kluang and sent to Kota Tinggi in southern Johore, to watch for any Japanese approaching from the east. On 29 January, they arrived at Pontian Kechil on the

west coast of Malaya and acted as the rearguard of the brigade as it crossed into Singapore on 30 January. The battalion's total strength was 150.[45] Next day, the causeway connecting the island to Malaya was blown up. The long retreat was over; the last battle of the campaign was about to begin.

The Fall of Singapore: III Indian Corps had made immense sacrifices with one objective in mind: to buy time for Malaya Command to reinforce its defences in Singapore. It had largely fulfilled its mission. By the end of January 1942, one British division, two Indian brigades, and fifty fighter aircraft had arrived in Singapore, besides several thousand Indian and Australian troops as reinforcements for the depleted formations already there.[46] But the British were unable to regain their balance or shake off the paralysis that had afflicted them from the start. The fate of Singapore would be no different from that of Malaya.

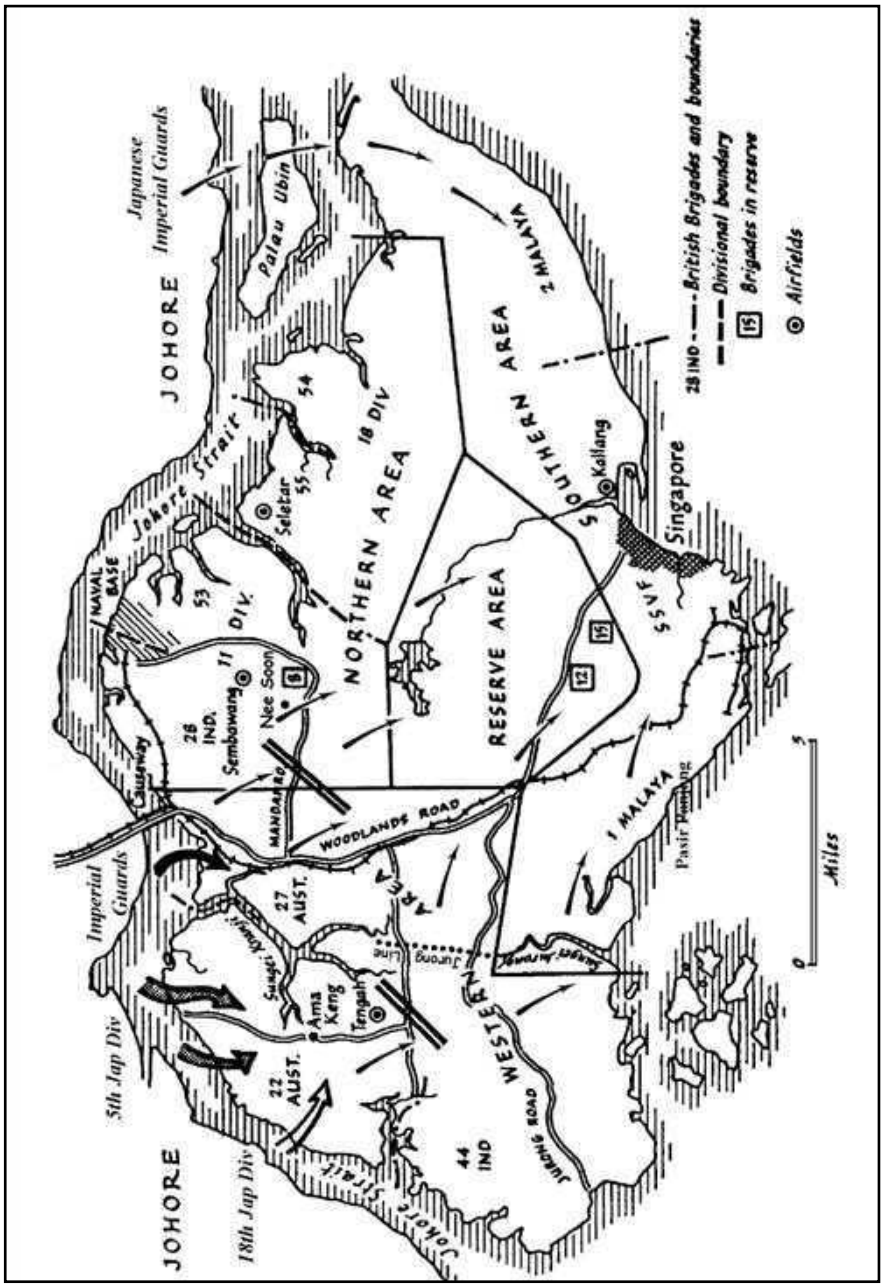
The formations that had withdrawn from Malaya were scarcely fit for fighting, while the reinforcements consisted of raw and untrained troops, who were disoriented and bewildered by the events. Among these was 7/8th Punjab under Lieutenant Colonel Willis Southern, who landed at Singapore on 25 January, with the 44th Indian Brigade. This brigade had been training for desert warfare, when it was diverted to Singapore. Also waiting in Singapore was a draft of 450 half-trained recruits under Lieutenant Colonel RCZ Johns, who had arrived as reinforcement for 1/8th Punjab. The remnants of 1/8th Punjab after their arrival in Singapore had been located at Bidadari Camp. On 5 February, they separated from 2/9th Jat, and the battalion was reformed with the draft from India.[47]

As hasty preparations were carried out for the defence of Singapore, British forces were reorganized. The 9th Indian Division was merged into 11th Indian Division, which was responsible for defence of the north-central part of the island. The 28th Brigade was holding naval base up to the causeway, while the 8th, 12th and

6/15th Brigades were in reserve. The 8th Australian Division with 44th Indian Brigade under command was responsible for the western sector. The 27th Australian Brigade was on the left of 28th Indian Brigade, from the causeway to Sungei Kranji. Next to it, the 22nd Australian Brigade was holding the north-western sector, while the 44th Indian Brigade was deployed in the south-western sector from Sungei Berih to Sungei Jurong. 7/8th Punjab was on extreme left of the brigade. The 18th British Division was responsible for the north-eastern sector, where General Percival expected the main Japanese attack. The southern sector around the city was held by Fortress Troops.[48] Percival had again dispersed his forces, allowing the Japanese to maintain superiority at the point of their choosing. It was a fatal error.

Contrary to British expectations, the main Japanese attack came from the northwest, against the Australians. The Australians had done well in Johore, but here, they wilted under pressure. Their commander, General Gordon Bennett has been highly critical of the performance of Indian Army, but their own performance was hardly impressive. Bennett's conduct of operations in Singapore was disastrously incompetent, and his troops were described as "so undisciplined as to be a liability to their own side".[49] As defeat became imminent, General Bennett abandoned his men and fled to Australia. His troops nicknamed their running shoes as 'Gordon Bennetts'.[50]

After a day of intense artillery preparation, the Japanese launched their seaborne invasion of Singapore on 8 February at 2000 hours. The attack against 44th Indian Brigade was easily repulsed, but the 22nd Australian Brigade, which bore the brunt of the invasion, was overrun and the Australians retreated towards the head of Sungei Kranji. By the evening of 9 February, the Japanese had occupied Tengah airfield, and their troops were pouring into the island. The 12th and 6/15th Indian Brigades were placed under General Bennett, and he was ordered to occupy a new defensive



33. The Japanese Invasion of Singapore, 8-15 February 1942.

line from Kranji to Jurong Road called the Jurong Line. The 44th Indian Brigade was ordered to fall back to this new defensive position.[51]

Meanwhile in the northern sector, the 27th Australian Brigade, which had been under Japanese attack since the evening of 9 February, finding its left flank exposed, withdrew towards Mandai, without informing the 11th Indian Division. This not only exposed the Indians' left flank, but also left the causeway uncovered. The Japanese, who had been repairing the causeway, were soon able to move tanks into the island. A request by 11th Indian Division to the Australian brigade commander to reoccupy his position was refused and the 8th Indian Brigade was moved to fill the gap.[52]

On 5 February, the reformed 1/8th Punjab, now part of the 8th Indian Brigade, was given fourteen days to reorganize. But on 9 February, it was ordered to the frontline at Nee Soon. Lieutenant Colonel Johns was admitted to the hospital with an ankle injury, and the command was taken over by Major Kewley, who had been DAQMG of the 9th Indian Division. Major Kewley was badly wounded by mortar fire on 11 February and the command devolved on Lieutenant Tehl Singh, a newly arrived officer. The officer's loyalties were uncertain and on 12 February, he vanished from the battalion. Captain Finlayson rejoined the battalion on the same day and took over command.[53] 1/8th Punjab was totally unprepared to go into action and when on 12 February, the Japanese attacked the 8th Brigade front, it started disintegrating.[54] The battalion was withdrawn to the Sembawang airbase, where it remained until the surrender, a few days later.[55]

Meanwhile on the Jurong Line, the disposition of British forces on 10 February from north to south was: 12th Indian Brigade, 22nd Australian Brigade, 6/15th and 44th Indian Brigades. But a succession of unsound decisions by local commanders led to the abandonment of Jurong Line.[56] Bennett was ordered to restore

the situation, but the Japanese pre-empted him by attacking first. Late in the evening, a column of Japanese tanks moving down the Choa Chu Kang Road overran the weak 12th Indian Brigade and advanced towards the strategic Batu Timah heights. By late night, the Japanese had occupied Batu Timah and overwhelmed the 22nd Australian Brigade, which then retreated towards Reformatory Road. The 6/15th Indian Brigade finding itself isolated, tried to disengage and withdraw, but was cut to pieces. By 11 February, both Indian brigades had ceased to exist.[57]

The Japanese were quick to exploit their successes, and advanced both from north as well as the west. The 44th Indian Brigade had withdrawn towards Pasir Panjang and 7/8th Punjab took up position at the junction of Reformatory and Ulu Pandan Roads. On 12 February, 44th Brigade was subjected to intense Japanese bombardment suffered heavy casualties. At 0930 hours, 7/8th Punjab was attacked by a Japanese force and pushed back from its position. Over the next two days, 44th Brigade was continuously pushed back, retreating towards the Golf Course. On 15 February, it was again engaged in furious fighting and suffered heavy losses due to incessant Japanese attacks and heavy shelling.[58]

All efforts by the British to stem the Japanese onslaught had been ineffectual. Despite the gallant conduct of their soldiers, the disjointed and confused British campaign never really had a chance. As the noose tightened around Singapore, the British surrendered unconditionally on 15 February. General Percival later remarked that responsibility for the defeat in Malaya did not lay with the ground commanders, but elsewhere. He was only partly right. The conduct of British commanders in Singapore was hardly inspiring. But nobody can take away the credit from the Japanese, who had waged a brilliant campaign. Their speed of movement, ability to infiltrate and overcome obstacles, and the bold use of tanks had been decisive. The fall of Singapore was the biggest

military disaster in British history. Around 85,000 British, Indian, Australian and Malay troops were taken Prisoners of War. The damage to British prestige was incalculable and the myth of European invincibility was shattered. The event had huge symbolic importance and heralded the end of European domination of Asia.

Soon after the surrender, British officers were separated from their Indian troops and sent to Changi Prison. In November, they were moved to the Burma-Siam Railway, where they endured terrible hardships and cruelties at the hands of the Japanese. Fortunately, most of the officers of 8th Punjab Regiment survived the ordeal. The only casualty was Major AJ Staples of 7/8th Punjab, who died in a POW camp in Siam in 1943. For the Indian officers, VCOs and men, the Japanese had different plans. They were subjected to intense pressure to join the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army (INA). Despite intensive propaganda and physical torture, the 8th Punjabis shared with Baluchis the distinction of having the smallest proportion of men joining the INA.[59]

The INA was formed under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, the erstwhile President of the Indian National Congress. He wanted to liberate India by military means and had been collaborating with the Germans and the Japanese. The surrender of so many Indian soldiers provided him with the opportunity to gain the army he dreamed of. The Japanese formed the INA under the command of Captain Mohan Singh of 1/14th Punjab, who styled himself as 'General.' The bewildered Indian soldiers, stunned by their defeat and separated from their officers, were subjected to intense propaganda to join the INA. Those who resisted were tortured and even murdered. Out of the 60,000 Indian POWs, about 20,000 joined the INA. The majority of these were Hindus and Sikhs; the Muslims mostly standing firm.[60] While hardly anyone has heard of the INA in Pakistan, in India, they are hailed as freedom fighters and Bose, the self-styled 'Netaji' is revered as a demigod. The INA's claims of patriotism

were soon exposed, when they performed dismally against the Indian Army in Burma; most of them deserting or surrendering without putting up a fight.[61] As the British advanced towards Malaya in 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose tried to flee but was killed in a plane crash.

The British were shocked by the large number of Indian soldiers who had turned against them. But they should not have been. Several of the Indian officers who joined the INA had endured racism and discrimination at the hands of their British colleagues and were seething with anger. The INA provided them with the opportunity to get back at their tormenters. In that respect, the INA was a monster that the British had helped create. However, such grievances were only part of the complex problem: many simply joined to seek an easy way out of a harsh captivity under the Japanese. But no matter what the motivation, nothing could excuse the brutal excesses committed by these men against their countrymen.

After the war, the Congress put intense pressure on the British not to punish the INA. The British succumbed to the pressure and the INA was let off the hook by simple dismissal from the Army, including many of those who had committed atrocities against their comrades. It was a folly for which the price was paid by the Muslims of India. Many of the Sikh *jathas* or armed gangs that murdered hundreds of thousands of Muslims at the time of partition of India were led by ex-INA soldiers.[62] The INA was a stain on the honour of the British Indian Army. They were no freedom fighters; at best, they were cowards, and at worst, sadistic murderers. To hail them as heroes is to insult soldiers everywhere.

The courageous conduct of Captain CE James, Lieutenant Ijaz Ali and the VCOs of 1/8th Punjab in holding the battalion together and resisting the INA is especially praiseworthy. Captain James was later awarded the MBE for “gallant and distinguished

services whilst Prisoner of War". Two other outstanding personalities were Havildar Agar Khan and the *Moulvi*. Both of them died during captivity. In 1942, a party of sixty POWs of 1/8th Punjab was sent to Sumatra, while in January 1943, 300 men were transferred to camps in New Britain. Of the mostly sick and wounded who remained in Singapore, about forty were sent to Java and then Sumatra. Their transport ship was torpedoed on the way and all of them were killed. Among 7/8th Punjab, Subedar Major Atta Mohammad greatly distinguished himself during captivity and was awarded the MBE.[63] The men of 8th Punjab Regiment endured an extremely harsh and brutal captivity of the Japanese and their INA allies. They were subjected to torture, starvation and neglect, but stood firm and did not betray the honour of their regiment.

After the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, the liberated POWs started returning home. On 25 March 1946, 1/8th Punjab started reforming around a nucleus of repatriated POWs of the 1st and 7th Battalions at Lahore. By 28 April, the battalion had been brought up to strength by a draft of officers and men from 9/8th Punjab, which was being disbanded. The final composition of the battalion after re-raising was:

	Officers	VCOs	ORs
1/8th Punjab	4	12	151
7/8th Punjab	1	1	105
9/8th Punjab	10	4	420
Other battalions	2	5	91

Thus, the battalion not only preserved its own identity, but also kept alive the memory of two battalions of the Regiment (7/8th and 9/8th Punjab) that were passing into history. On 22 May, Lieutenant Colonel CH Genders assumed command of his old battalion. He, along with the twelve original VCOs, provided continuity with the past for the reconstituted battalion. On 25 May, 1/8th Punjab proceeded to Bannu, moving to Mir Ali in February 1947, where it was stationed at the time of independence.[64]

Iraq and Iran 1941-45

Iraq had gained independence from Britain in 1932. But it was a conditional independence, with Britain retaining military bases and rights under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. This had fuelled anti-British sentiments among the Iraqis and on 1 April 1941, the pro-British Iraqi Government was overthrown by the nationalist Rashid Ali with support of the Iraqi Army. The British, concerned about their oil supplies, promptly invaded Iraq. The invasion force, known as Iraq Force, was commanded by Lieutenant General Edward Quinan (3/8th Punjab). By early June, the whole of Iraq had been occupied. When the Germans invaded Soviet Union, the possibility of a Germen threat to Iraq and Iran from the Caucasus caused much concern to the Allies. Consequently, in September, the British and the Soviets invaded and occupied Iran. The Iraq Force was renamed Persia and Iraq Force or Paiforce. The main mission of Paiforce was two-fold: to resist any German invasion from the north; and to channel aid to the Soviets through Iran.[65]

In 1942, the force was reorganized into a separate command: the Persia and Iraq Command, consisting of the Tenth Army under General Quinan (three Indian and one British infantry divisions and an armoured division) plus an Indian division and a Polish corps in Command Reserve. Although the German invasion never materialized and the troops were gradually sent to other theatres of war, the men of Paiforce made an important contribution to the Allied war effort under difficult conditions. This included preparation and maintenance of defences, lines of communication and logistic infrastructure. It was a difficult and thankless job, which nonetheless was considered important at the time.[66] Two 8th Punjabi battalions, 3/8th and 4/8th Punjab, served with Paiforce.

At the outbreak of war, 4/8th Punjab was serving on the Northwest Frontier. In April 1941, the battalion moved to

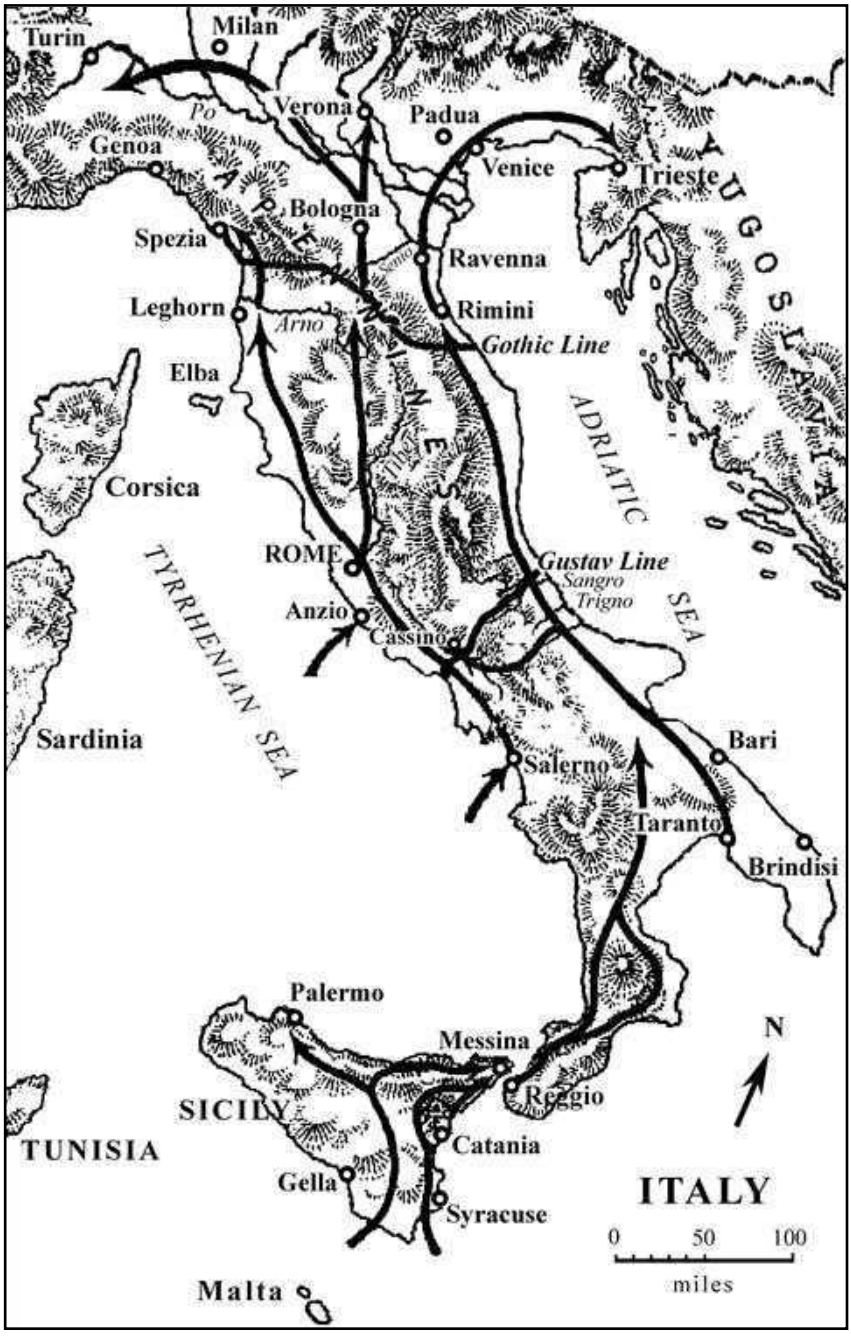
Secunderabad and in October, it sailed for Basra under the command of Lieutenant Colonel AG Scotland. The battalion remained in Iraq and Iran throughout the war as part of the 6th Indian Division. It did not see any active service but did much useful work in preparation of defences and protection of lines of communication and strategic installations. The battalion served at various places including Pai Tak, Kermanshah, Kirkuk, Baghdad, Pul-i-Tang, Tehran and Qum. Some relief from the tedious routine was obtained by *shikar* and sporting events in which the 4/8th Punjabis excelled. The battalion returned to India in January 1946,[67] and in November, proceeded to Fort Sandeman (Zhob) in Baluchistan. In April 1947, the battalion moved to Tank in NWFP to quell communal disturbances. At the time of independence, it was stationed at Gardai.[68]

Like its sister battalion, 3/8th Punjab was also stationed on the Northwest Frontier in 1939. In October 1940, it joined 19th Infantry Brigade of the 8th Indian Division at Delhi. After intensive training at Delhi and Dhond, the battalion arrived at Basra on 17 August 1941. Its stay in Iraq was uneventful; the occasional excitement being provided by local thieves raiding the battalion compound. In 1942, a rather embarrassing situation arose when Army Headquarters posted two commanding officers to the battalion: Colonel DJ Wilson-Haffenden and Lieutenant Colonel HL Wyndham. The situation was soon resolved, when Colonel Wilson-Haffenden left for a staff appointment. After tours of duty at Buqoq, Baghdad and Kifri, the battalion left for Syria in April 1943, spending the next five months training hard for mountain warfare. In September 1943, it embarked for Alexandria from Tripoli, *en route* to Taranto in Italy.[69]

11
One More River to Cross – Italy 1943-45

By 1943, the tide of war had turned against the Germans. In February, remnants of the German Sixth Army surrendered at Stalingrad while in May, German resistance in North Africa was finally broken when eight German and Italian divisions surrendered to the Allies in Tunisia. The Allies now turned their attention towards Germany's shaky ally Italy, which seemed ready to throw in the towel. The invasion of Italy was entrusted to the British Eighth Army and the largely American Fifth Army. It was hoped that opening of this new front would secure the Allied line of communication in the Mediterranean, bring about the collapse of the Italians and pin down large number of German troops in Italy, away from France and the Russian Front. In July, the Allies invaded Sicily. The Italian defence rapidly crumbled and on 9 September, Italy surrendered to the Allies, prompting the Germans to seize control of the country.

In September, the Allies crossed into the Italian mainland with the Eighth Army advancing along the Adriatic Coast and the Fifth Army on the Tyrrhenian Coast. The German position in Italy was extremely precarious, and they had only six divisions to take over control of the country and to resist the invasion. Their initial plan was to withdraw north towards the Alps and to check the Allies there. However, the over-cautious Allied advance allowed the Germans to rush in reinforcements and prepare their defences. Field Marshal Kesselring, the able German commander, planned a flexible defence by delaying the Allied advance at successive defensive lines. At two of these places—the Gustav and the Gothic Lines, he intended to stand and fight. The peculiar topography of the Italian Peninsula provided ideal conditions for this kind of warfare.



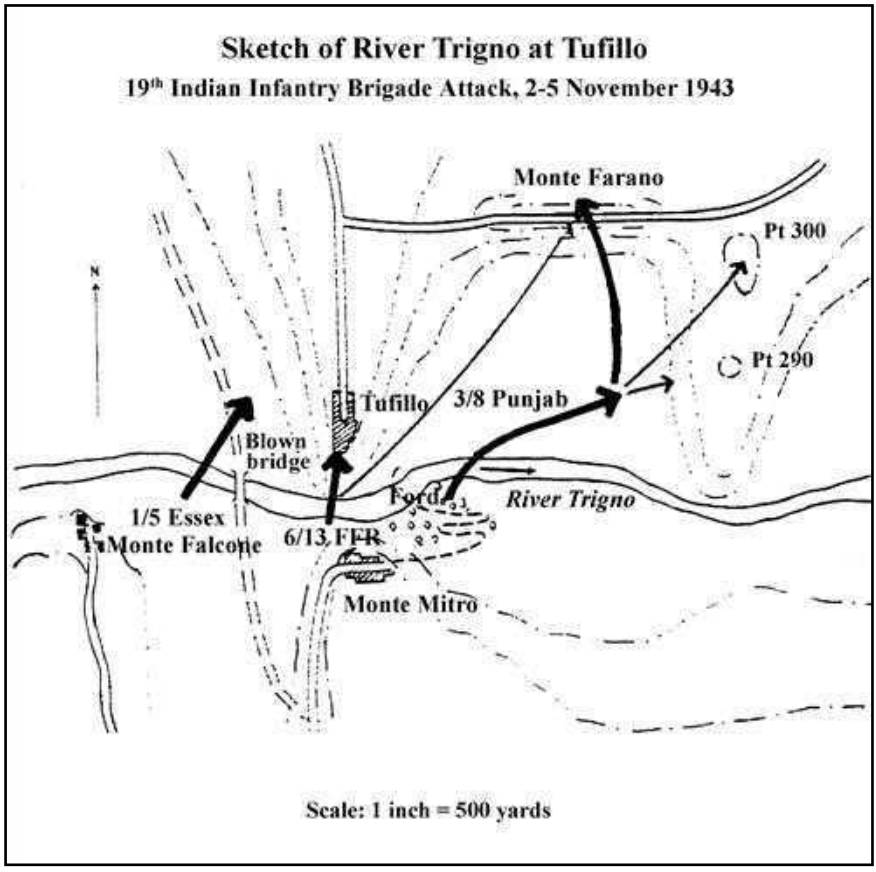
34. The Allied Advance into Italy 1943-45.

The Italian Peninsula is traversed by a chain of mountains along its central spine, with rivers running laterally into the sea on both sides. Any invading army had to cross these numerous watercourses in order to advance northwards, while the defenders holding the commanding heights could easily hamper the invader's progress. The Germans converted the entire peninsula into a formidable fortress by exploiting the natural advantages of the terrain and preparing fortified positions. They blew up key bridges and made extensive use of landmines. The Allied problems were compounded by the weather. In the rainy season, mountain streams could suddenly become raging torrents and the ground turned into muddy quagmire, making all movement painfully slow. On such a terrain, "surprise like speed of movement was impossible to attain. The battle therefore had to be fought the hard way. The enemy must be found and destroyed in his strength".[1] The Allies failed to capitalize on their naval and air superiority by not launching seaborne and airborne attacks in the German rear. Their situation was also not helped by mutual suspicion and bickering among the British and the Americans.

The Allied advance started meeting stiffer resistance as it approached the broken and hilly territory a hundred and forty miles north of Taranto. It was at this time that the 8th Indian Division with 3/8th Punjab arrived at Taranto in September 1943. It was later followed by the 4th and 10th Indian Divisions. At the outbreak of war, the British had ruled out employment of the Indian Army against Germans or on the European continent. However, their reservations about Indians' ability to assimilate modern technology and to face German troops were soon laid to rest following the outstanding performance of the Indian Army in Africa. The Germans had rated the 4th Indian Division as the best Allied formation they faced in North Africa.[2] They were about to get more of the same in Italy.

3/8th Punjab landed at Taranto on 24 September 1943, as part of the 19th Indian Infantry Brigade. The other battalions in the brigade were 6/13th Royal Frontier Force Rifles (present 1 FF) and 1/5th Essex. The 17th and 21st Indian Brigades were the other two brigades in the division. The 8th Division concentrated east of Taranto and then moved up to join V Corps of the Eighth Army, which was then approaching the Gustav Line, also called the Winter Line. The Gustav Line was a "flexible defensive zone" based upon a series of rivers and ridges on the Adriatic Coast and traversed the Italian Peninsula from the Sangro River Valley all the way to the Tyrrhenian Coast. Short of the Sangro, two rivers blocked Eighth Army's approach to the Gustav Line. These were the Biferno and the Trigno. On 7 October, Termoli on the coast was captured and the crossing over River Biferno was secured. The advance was then halted and the Eighth Army regrouped. It was here that the 8th Indian Division was brought into line and took over the Larino Sector on 19/20 October. In the meantime, the Fifth Army advancing on the opposite coast attacked and secured the crossing over River Volturno.[3]

Crossing of the Trigno: The advance of V Corps was led by the 78th British Division on the right and the 8th Indian Division on the left, with the objective of seizing bridgeheads on the River Trigno. Around this time, Lieutenant Colonel Wyndham left 3/8th Punjab to command 17th Brigade, which was leading the advance of 8th Division. The battalion was taken over by Major Molony of 1/12th FF.[4] On 25 October, about five miles short of the Trigno, 19th Brigade passed through 17th Brigade, with 1/5th Essex and 3/8th Punjab in the lead. The main objectives of the brigade were the villages of Monte Falcone and Monte Mitro on the southern bank of the river. From there, the brigade was to attack and seize the village of Tufillo on the opposite bank, and beyond it, the 2000-foot-high feature of Monte Farano.[5]



35. Crossing of the Trigno, 2-5 November 1943.

The battalion's first brush with the enemy came on 25 October, when A & D Companies went into action at San Felice and suffered their first casualty of the war. The next day, B Company under Subedar Major Chet Ram captured a ridge south of Monte Falcone. As the company advanced towards the German position, it came under small arms fire. While keeping a platoon in front to hold the enemy's attention, the Subedar Major sent one platoon on each flank of the Germans. The enemy was totally surprised, and the position was captured along with a number of Germans. An officer who tried to flee was pursued and killed. The

Germans were identified as members of the elite 1st Parachute Division—some of the finest troops in the world. On 27 October, the battalion launched a dawn attack on Monte Falcone under a creeping barrage of artillery. By 0745 hours, the village was captured without much opposition. In the meantime, 1/5th Essex had captured Monte Mitro.[6]

With the southern bank firmly in their hands, the next British objective was the crossing of the river itself. Here, the Trigno ran between sharp escarpments, 1500 feet high from the river, which was about a hundred yards wide. The retreating Germans had blown up the bridges, and all approaches were mined and under direct observation of the enemy occupying the high ground on the opposite bank. The crossing was delayed as heavy rains turned the river into a raging torrent and roads into quagmire, hampering all preparations for the attack.[7] Finally, early on 2 November, the 19th Brigade began crossing the river in heavy rain. The attack was led by 6/13th FF Rifles on the right and 1/5th Essex on the left, with 3/8th Punjab in reserve in front of Monte Mitro. Both the attacking battalions came under intense German fire and suffered heavy casualties. The Essex were forced to withdraw to the riverbank, while the Piffers were pinned down in front of a typical German 'hedgehog' position at Tufillo. "All approaches were mined and booby-trapped. A curtain of mortar bombs covered the minefield. Every house held a sniper. Attempts to close were met with showers of grenades. Quick savage sallies were flung against any ground won".[8]

Throughout the day, the Piffers hung on to their ground stubbornly despite grievous casualties. That night, C Company of 3/8th Punjab crossed the river to reinforce the Piffers' right flank and the attack was resumed, with the Punjabis assaulting a subsidiary spur on the right. But the attack was repulsed and the troops were forced back to their positions. Next day, the rest of 3/8th Punjab was committed to the attack. At 2100 hours on

3 November, the battalion crossed the river and silently moved into position abreast the Piffers. While the Piffers were to resume their assault on Monte Farano, the Punjabis were to take Monte Sorbo on the right.[9]

At 2300 hours, the attack commenced under artillery cover, with A Company on the left and C Company on the right. C Company under Captain Girdhari Singh gained its objective but A Company under Lieutenant DR Stewart was caught up in their own artillery barrage. The company suffered 54 casualties and became disorganized. The other two companies were moved in its support, while the isolated C Company was ordered to fall back to straighten the line and secure the right flank of the battalion. By now, dawn had broken and any withdrawal in daylight would have caused heavy casualties. Captain Girdhari Singh decided to withdraw into a thick wood on the enemy side of the ridge. While two of his platoons provided covering fire, one platoon swept down the ridge and attacked two German machine gun posts, which were firing on the Battalion Headquarters. The charge was led by Lance Havildar Allah Dad and succeeded in completely routing the Germans, thirteen of whom were killed, while eleven were captured. The gallant NCO was awarded the IDSM for his exploit.[10]

In the meantime, the attack of 6/13th FF Rifles had fallen short of its objective in the face of intense enemy fire. Throughout the day, both battalions were subjected to heavy shelling but hung on to their positions. During the night, the Germans pulled out and the Piffers occupied Tufillo, while 3/8th Punjab took Monte Farano. The advance of 8th Indian Division was resumed, with 17th and 21st Brigades in lead and 19th Brigade in reserve.

Capture of Perano: On 13 November, the 19th Indian Brigade came under command of the newly arrived 2nd New Zealand Division, which took up position on the left of 8th Indian Division. The 19th Brigade was to conceal the arrival and cover the

deployment of the New Zealanders, as they advanced towards River Sangro. On 14 November, the 19th Brigade passed through 17th Brigade at Atessa. Next day, the brigade began its advance, with 3/8th Punjab on the right and 6/13th FF Rifles on the left. On 16 November, 3/8th Punjab occupied the high ground two miles south of the river in order to deny the enemy observation of the area below, where the New Zealand division was forming up for its attack. Supported by two squadrons of Sherman tanks of the New Zealand division, it was then ordered to capture the hilltop village of Perano to secure the south bank of the Sangro and gain observation for its crossing.[11]

On 17 November at around 1000 hours, as the tanks approached the battalion's position, they raised a big column of dust, alerting the enemy. The Germans responded by plastering the area with high explosive and air burst fire. Several men were killed including Lieutenant Battershill, the D Company Commander, while many more were wounded. These included Lieutenant Colonel Molony and Subedar Major Chet Ram. In the meantime, a section under Havildar Kuldip Singh had been sent forward to reconnoitre a knoll near Perano. The position was held by the enemy, who opened up fire on the reconnaissance party. Havildar Kuldip Singh charged the German position, wounding several of them and forcing the rest to flee. He then occupied the knoll and despite heavy counter-shelling, retained his position until the capture of Perano. He was awarded the IDSM for his gallantry and initiative.[12]

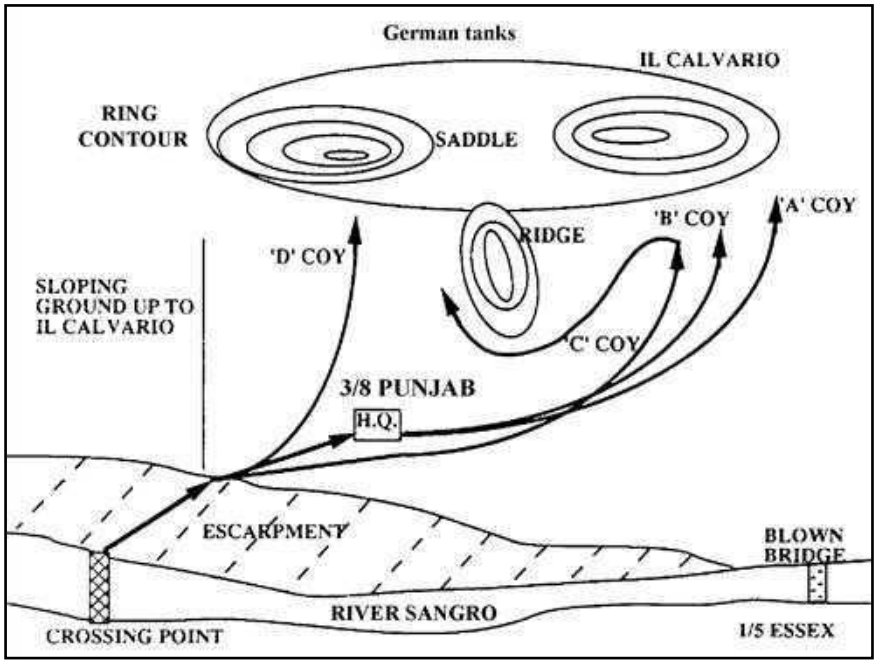
The attack on Perano went in at 1200 hours. The Germans had prepared a strongpoint to block the approach from the right, which they considered the only feasible line of attack. But C Company, supported by a squadron of tanks, climbed precipitous slopes and entered the village from a different direction, taking the Germans by complete surprise. Although the other squadron of tanks and the battalion carriers were halted at the heavily defended

strongpoint, the damage had been done. By dusk, the Germans had withdrawn and the village was occupied by 3/8th Punjab. During the battle, Captain D Trenam, the Adjutant, commanded the battalion until the arrival of Major J Muirhead later in the day.[13]

The Battle of the Sangro: By mid-November, the Allies had closed up to the Gustav Line. The Eighth Army had arrived at the River Sangro, with V Corps on the right and XIII Corps on the left. The Allied plan of action was to smash the Gustav Line in the east with the Eighth Army, which was then to swing west from Pescara on the lateral highway to Rome, thus threatening the Germans from left and rear. In the meantime, the Fifth Army was to attack the Gustav Line in front of Cassino and then exploit its gains up the Liri Valley, while a seaborne landing was made at Anzio in the German rear.

On the Eighth Army front, the assault across the Sangro was to be carried out by V Corps on a fifteen-mile front extending from the Adriatic Coast to the Maiella Mountains. The corps front was held from right to left, by the 78th British, 8th Indian and 2nd New Zealand Divisions. In the first phase, the 78th Division was to establish a bridgehead in the coastal region, followed by attacks by the other two divisions. The 19th Indian Brigade, which had been screening the deployment of the New Zealanders, was to lead the divisional attack by establishing a bridgehead at Il Calvario, eight miles inland from Mozzagrogna. After seizing the high ground on the opposite bank, it was to protect the left flank of the New Zealand division, as it crossed the river and advanced towards Chieti.[14]

The River Sangro was a formidable natural obstacle that had been skilfully fortified by the Germans. It was about 300 yards wide in its lower reaches and became a raging torrent up to five feet deep after heavy rains. On the 19th Brigade front, about 800 yards beyond the northern bank of the river, there was a sharp



36. Attack of 3/8th Punjab across the River Sangro.

escarpment, broken by gullies and covered by stunted trees. From the escarpment, the ground rose for another 1000 yards, ending in a humped ridge, where the Germans had built their defences. The ridge then continued eastwards in a series of knolls on which were scattered hamlets that had been transformed into fortresses with twenty feet deep shell-proof bunkers, cleverly sited machine gun nests and connecting tunnels. All approaches from the river were heavily mined and booby-trapped. From their positions on the high ground, the Germans had excellent observation of the river. Facing V Corps were the 65th German Infantry Division in the coastal region and the 1st Parachute Division in the western sector, with 26th Panzer Division in support.[15]

The 78th Division established its bridgehead on 20 November, but heavy rains intervened to upset the plans. The river became swollen and unpredictable, the ground turned into a

muddy quagmire and bridges could not be thrown across the river, delaying the attack of 8th Division. In the meantime, on the New Zealand front, the 19th Indian Brigade was ordered to capture the San Angelo-Il Calvario feature on 23 November and secure the left flank of the division. The attack was to be led by 3/8th Punjab, who were to capture Il Calvario after a silent night attack. The objective was a commanding twin-topped feature, with Il Calvario on the right separated from a ring contour on the left by a saddle. The 8th Punjabis were to be followed two hours later by 1/5th Essex on the right, with San Angelo as its objective. 6/13th FF Rifles was in reserve at Archi.[16]

3/8th Punjab left Perano at 2030 hours on 22 November and concentrated on the southern bank for the assault. The river at the fording place was from knee to hip deep, while the flow was rapid. At 0300 hours on 23 November, A Company under Lieutenant Stewart crossed the river in heavy rain, and undetected by the enemy, secured the bridgehead on Woody Spur, a thickly wooded mound. They were followed by the rest of the battalion, with the men wet and cold from the freezing rain. With B Company in reserve, C Company under Captain Girdhari Singh advanced towards Il Calvario, while D Company under Subedar Amar Singh moved towards the ring contour.[17]

As D Company was nearing its objective, it ran into a minefield, alerting the Germans, who opened up an intense fire on fixed lines. Thanks to the tracers being used, the men were able to avoid the lines of fire and did not suffer any casualties. By dawn, the company had taken its objective after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, ten of whom were captured. The Germans counter-attacked with about fifty men supported by three Mark IV tanks. Subedar Amar Singh requested artillery support, which initially landed on his own position, injuring him. But as the range was adjusted, the artillery fire broke the German attack. Half an hour later, a second counterattack was repulsed without artillery

support. Throughout the day, the Germans tried to dislodge the company, but the men grimly held on to their position. As Subedar Amar Singh was being evacuated by a party of three, they were ambushed by a German patrol. All four were wounded. However, Subedar Amar Singh immediately counter-attacked and captured the three Germans, who were then drafted in assisting the wounded back to the Regimental Aid Post.[18]

Meanwhile, as C Company reached the lower slopes of Il Calvario, it came under heavy fire from machine guns and tanks positioned in the area of the saddle. Captain Girdhari Singh decided to seek protection of a ridge on his left. But first, a German machine gun post covering its approach had to be eliminated. A party of five men under Jemadar Sultan Bakhsh was ordered to neutralize the threat. The party crawled up to within a few yards of the unsuspecting enemy, and while their Bren gunner covered one machine gun, the rest charged the other machine gun. Crew of one German machine gun surrendered while the other abandoned its post and fled. C Company resumed its advance until just short of the saddle, when it was ordered to halt and cover B Company, which was now ordered to take Il Calvario with A Company in support.[19]

By dawn, A and B Companies had captured Il Calvario and C Company was withdrawn to Battalion Headquarters in reserve. The battalion had suffered relatively few casualties so far. However, the two forward companies had not been able to dig in due to the rocky nature of ground and were completely exposed. As day broke, they were subjected to a murderous machine gun, mortar and artillery fire from both flanks and suffered heavy casualties. Lieutenant JB Long, the B Company Commander lost an eye, while his Second-in-Command, Subedar Het Ram was killed. The command of the company was taken over by Jemadar Sumera Ram. By late afternoon, he had repulsed four German counterattacks on his depleted company. During one of these

attacks, the Germans came right up to the trenches, killing the wounded, but were repulsed by Lance Naik Ram Sarup.[20] This gallant soldier had beaten off repeated German attacks until he was left holding the platoon position alone; all the men in his platoon having become casualties. When ordered to fall back to the company, he refused until all the wounded had been evacuated. He was awarded the IDSM for his exceptional courage and devotion.[21] C Company was moved in support of B Company but was caught up in the last German counterattack. It however, was able to beat off the attack.

Towards the right of B, A Company was also having a rough time. It repulsed three determined German counterattacks, losing many men in the process. Lieutenant Stewart, the Company Commander was killed by enemy shelling at 1300 hours while on his way to report to the Battalion Headquarters. By the time the Germans launched their third attack, Jemadar Ghazan Khan had only three men left in his platoon, but he kept the enemy at bay.[22] Naik Fazal Hussein was in charge of an isolated section covering the left flank of the company. Through repeated German counterattacks, his entire section was either killed or wounded but he maintained his post in action and held off the enemy until reinforced. For his courage and coolness under fire, the gallant NCO was awarded the IDSM.[23]

A Company had been reduced to thirty men, when Lance Naik Akbar Khan, the Company Signaller, seeing that the left section of the company was in danger of being overrun, took ammunition and grenades to the post on his own initiative. Finding the section LMG unmanned, he started firing the gun himself. As the Germans closed in, he left the trench and firing from his hip, killed one of them and wounded four others. When he ran out of ammunition, he fired an abandoned German automatic until the enemy was forced to withdraw. He was assisted by Sepoy Sadiq Hussain Shah, the Company Runner, who had come to his aid and

helped repulse the Germans by throwing grenades at them. Both the men were awarded the IDSM for their gallantry.[24]

1/5th Essex on the right of 3/8th Punjab also suffered heavily and was pinned down short of its objective, with one forward company having retired in face of a fierce German counterattack. Meanwhile, the river had risen to four feet, and it was not possible to get tanks and anti-tank guns across to support the two battalions. Mules carrying ammunition were swept away in the strong current, while several wounded men were drowned during evacuation. By 1700 hours, the position of 3/8th Punjab had become untenable, and it was ordered by the Brigade Headquarters to withdraw towards 1/5th Essex.[25] Jemadar Sumera Ram objected to the withdrawal without the wounded but was told to cope with the situation. Captain Trenam went forward and organized the orderly withdrawal of the battalion, evacuating as many of the wounded as possible.[26]

In the meantime, Major Muirhead, the Acting CO along with Lieutenant Moon and part of the Battalion Headquarters went towards San Angelo to liaise with 1/5th Essex. On their way, they were surprised by a German patrol and Major Muirhead was captured but the rest managed to escape. Command was taken over by Captain Trenam, who showed great coolness, courage and determination in holding the battalion together in an extremely difficult situation. During the night, remnants of the battalion assembled at Woody Spur. By this time, the Sangro was in high flood and an attempt to cross it failed, with several men being swept away. Captain Trenam then decided to hold on to the bridgehead at Woody Spur.[27]

On the morning of 24 November, Captain Girdhari Singh received brigade's permission to reoccupy Il Calvario. He was convinced that the Germans had taken a severe beating and were in no shape to continue the fight. He was right. A patrol of C Company found the Germans gone and reoccupied the position.

Next day, the battalion occupied Altino, which had also been evacuated by the Germans. On 28 November, the New Zealanders successfully crossed the Sangro, and 19th Brigade reverted back to 8th Indian Division, having accomplished its task. On 29 November, 3/8th Punjab concentrated at Atessa.[28] During the Battle of the Sangro, the battalion had suffered grievous losses including four officers killed, two wounded and one captured. The company strengths were reduced to: A Company, 15; B Company, 22; C Company, 32; and D Company, 32. The battalion won a number of awards for its gallant conduct. These included the Military Cross for Captains Trenam and Girdhari Singh and six IDSMs including one for the indomitable Jemadar Sumera Ram.[29]

At Atessa, the battalion was reorganized under Lieutenant Colonel DM Cornah, who arrived from Fifth Army staff to take over command. Although not an 8th Punjabi, he soon endeared himself to the battalion and had it up and running again. While the 19th Brigade went into reserve, V Corps struck across the Sangro and by 30 November, it was firmly established on the other side. The Eighth Army now tried to exploit its gains, but the going was slow and the Germans fought bitterly for every inch of the ground. River Moro was crossed on 10 December and by 17 December, the 8th Indian Division was in front of Villa Grande. Meanwhile, on their right, the 1st Canadian Division, which had replaced the depleted 78th Division, was attacking Ortona, and on the left of the Indians, the New Zealanders were trying to take the fortress of Orsogna.

The Battle of Villa Grande: On 20 December 1943, the Canadians took Ortona and the 19th Indian Brigade was ordered to attack Villa Grande and exploit any gains up to the River Arielli. Villa Grande was held by a battalion of German paratroopers, who had turned the village into a fortress. Dugouts excavated below the ground floors of houses commanded all possible approaches to the village and well-sited anti-tank guns covered all entry points. The

attack was launched on 22 December by 1/5th Essex, supported by a squadron of British tanks. The Essex captured some houses on the southern edge of the village but all attempts to advance further were thwarted by fierce German resistance. By 25 December, the British battalion had advanced to the centre of the village after some fearsome house-to-house fighting, but the Germans still hung on stubbornly and refused to give in.[30]

On 25 December, the newly promoted Major Girdhari was informed that Major General Dudley Russell, the Division Commander had personally ordered him and his Company to take Villa Grande. The attack was to be supported by a squadron of British tanks. C Company formed up in an arrowhead formation, with one platoon forward and the other two in rear. The attack was launched at 1430 hours from the east. The leading platoon made for a group of houses 300 yards short of the village, thought to be held by the Essex. It was met with a burst of machine gun from one of the houses, killing five men on the spot. Major Girdhari Singh ordered the platoon to capture the position. With Tommy guns blazing and using grenades at close quarters, the men charged the house. Two Germans were killed and five captured, while another five ran towards a dugout 60 yards to the north.[31]

Major Girdhari Singh and Lance Naik Allah Dad occupied a trench alongside a haystack and covered the German dugout with a Bren gun. A burst from the dugout struck Allah Dad and cost him a finger. He refused to be evacuated until he had gotten even with the Germans. Major Girdhari gave him two grenades, and provided covering fire, as the gallant soldier crawled towards the enemy position. On arriving there, he threw one of the grenades inside the dugout, which was the signal for Major Girdhari Singh and the other men of the platoon to cease firing. Allah Dad immediately rushed the dugout, throwing in the other grenade. Three Germans were killed and five surrendered, even though Allah Dad was by

now unarmed. For this incredible act of bravery, Lance Naik Allah Dad was awarded the Indian Order of Merit.[32]

Any further advance by C Company was impossible until all houses had been cleared. The other platoons now came up and cleared the area of Germans, capturing seven of them. The remaining ground of 100 yards to the village was open and covered by a murderous crossfire by the enemy. The tanks could not advance to give cover due to thick mud, and the company's 2-inch mortars had been damaged during the fighting and were not available to lay a smoke screen. Major Girdhari Singh, noticing a nearby row of haystacks, set them alight with tracer bullets from captured German machine guns. Soon, the area was blanketed in thick smoke. To mislead the Germans, the men repeatedly raised their war cry of *Maro Nara-i-Haidri, Ya Ali!* The Germans fired furiously through the smoke, but as nothing happened, they became suspicious and held their fire when the war cry was raised for the fourth time. The 8th Punjabis now charged through the smoke. The nearest houses were captured after door-to-door fighting with the paratroopers, who suffered heavy casualties including eleven taken prisoner. However, the Punjabis too had suffered grievous losses and only twenty-five of them remained.[33]

The company was running out of ammunition, especially grenades. An attempt was made to bring in ammunition by mules, but they were all killed, 25 yards short of the company position. Sepoy Shamash Din dashed across the open ground and despite getting wounded was able to bring back four boxes of grenades under heavy enemy fire. As evening approached, there was still no contact with the Essex towards the left of the Punjabis. The gap between the two was covered by a German machine gun post in a nearby house. The Company Commander called for volunteers to eliminate the MG post. Naiks Raja Khan, Mohammad Akram and Mohammad Benares came forward, and under the cover of darkness, advanced towards the enemy position from the right. But

as they neared the German post, they were detected. The enemy machine gun opened up, wounding Naik Benares. Despite the fire, the men continued their advance until about fifteen yards away, when they threw in grenades and charged the post. Two Germans were killed while the rest fled. Akram and Raja Khan chased the paratroopers, firing at them with their Tommy guns until they reached the centre of Villa Grande, having cleared the gap of all Germans. Contact was established with the Essex and the two NCOs returned to the company with their wounded comrade. Both men were awarded the IDSM for their gallant action.[34]

Throughout the next day, heavy fighting raged inside the village and the Germans stubbornly resisted all efforts to evict them. At dawn on 27 December, the Germans opened fire on the company position with two anti-tank guns, bringing the three-storey house down. Twelve Punjabis along with some Essex men were buried under the collapsed building. All efforts to dig them out were thwarted by heavy German fire. As the ground dried, Major Girdhari Singh called in tank support, and riding on top of the lead tank, pointed out German strongpoints, which were then blown up by the tanks. The Germans were forced to come out in the open and were cut down by machine guns. A few holdouts on the northern fringes of the village were flushed out by a British battalion moving in from the north. By 29 December, the village had been cleared of all Germans. In the C Company, only twelve men remained out of the eighty, who had started off four days earlier.[35]

The British were now on the line Ortona-Orsogna, the latter of which was still defying the New Zealanders. The "Eighth Army had broken into but not through" the Gustav Line. A particularly severe winter was hampering all operations, and the Germans had rushed in reinforcements. The tired Eighth Army, led by the overcautious General Montgomery, had been slow to exploit its gains. By the end of the year, the offensive on the Adriatic Coast

had ground to a halt, well short of Pescara and the highway to Rome. The focus now shifted towards the other side of Italy, as the Fifth Army tried to breach the Gustav Line at Cassino. In the meantime, operations on the frozen Adriatic Front were reduced to a war of patrols and counter-patrols.

New Year found 3/8th Punjab in position on the line of River Arielli. On 6 January 1944, Lieutenant Colonel W Sandison arrived from 2/8th Punjab to take over command of the battalion. The next several weeks were spent in aggressive patrolling and minor engagements. Several casualties were suffered due to shelling and encounters with enemy patrols. In February, the 2nd New Zealand Division left for the Cassino Front and 3/8th Punjab was ordered to occupy a salient in front of Orsogna. On the night 18/19 February, the Commando Platoon of 3/8th Punjab under Lieutenant J Landsman was ordered to capture a German prisoner from Orsogna to confirm whether the 1st Parachute Division was being withdrawn from the sector.[36]

The platoon, with twenty-five men, moved silently into the pitch-dark night, and advanced 1500 yards up a spur. Entering an enemy post, they surprised a section of Germans, two of whom were killed or wounded while another two were taken prisoner. But the commotion alerted the entire garrison, and the platoon came under heavy fire from several directions. Having accomplished its mission, the platoon started withdrawing but ran into a minefield. Twelve men, including the lieutenant were wounded, some seriously. The German prisoners were killed while trying to escape. Lieutenant Landsman ordered his Second-in-Command, Jemadar Kuldip Singh to withdraw the platoon, leaving him and the other wounded behind. But the VCO refused. He called in artillery support and under its cover, began withdrawing with the wounded. By now, the Germans were moving in against the Punjabis. Jemadar Kuldip twice went forward to discourage the pursuing Germans with grenades while the wounded were being

collected. One man still remained unaccounted for and the VCO again went looking for him but could not find him. The rest of the party then withdrew in good order, carrying back the wounded safely. The Germans, who considered Orsogna to be impregnable, were much perturbed by this incursion. Jemadar Kuldip Singh was awarded the IOM.[37] In April, the 8th Indian Division moved to the Cassino Front with XIII Corps.

The Gustav Line: West of the Adriatic Coast, the Gustav Line lay across the high Matesi Mountains in Central Italy. These mountains commanded all approaches from south, east and west. A prominent feature of these mountains above the town of Cassino was called Monte Cassino or Monastery Hill. It overlooked the valleys of River Rapido to the east, and River Liri to the northwest. Route 6, the main highway to Rome from the south, went through the Liri Valley after passing through Cassino. Thus, Monte Cassino barred the way to Rome and was the key to German defences on the Gustav Line. It was extremely well-fortified and defended by some of the best German divisions.

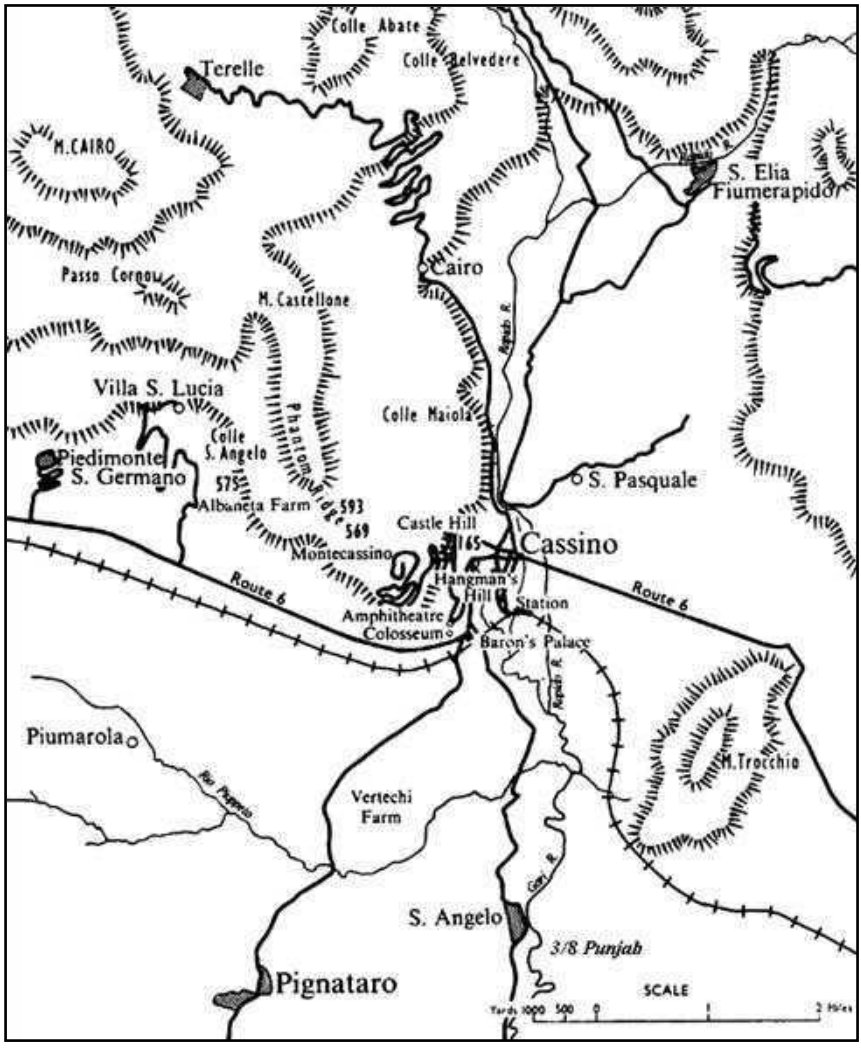
The Fifth Army plan for offensive in January 1944 was to attack the Gustav Line at Cassino with II US Corps, followed by a seaborne landing at Anzio in the German rear by VI US Corps. Although the Anzio bridgehead was established, it failed to get off the beach, while the II Corps attack failed to break the German line in front of Cassino. A second American attack on 26 January also ended in failure. The badly bruised Americans were withdrawn from the Cassino Front in February, and their place was taken over by the 2nd New Zealand Division and the newly arrived 4th Indian Division. Repeating the folly of the Americans, these two fine divisions were hurled in frontal attacks against the Cassino defences in March and were badly mauled.

Clearly, a new approach was required. The Allies moved the Eighth Army less V Corps, from the Adriatic Coast to the Cassino Front. By May, they had deployed twelve divisions in

front of Cassino, with another four close behind in reserve. Facing them were six German divisions. There were another six Allied divisions at Anzio against five German divisions. With overwhelming superiority and better planning and coordination, the Allies hoped to achieve success by a modification of their January plan of offensive. Elaborate measures were taken to conceal the redeployment and concentration of forces while at the same time, the Germans were deceived into believing that another seaborne landing was planned at Civitavecchia, north of Rome.

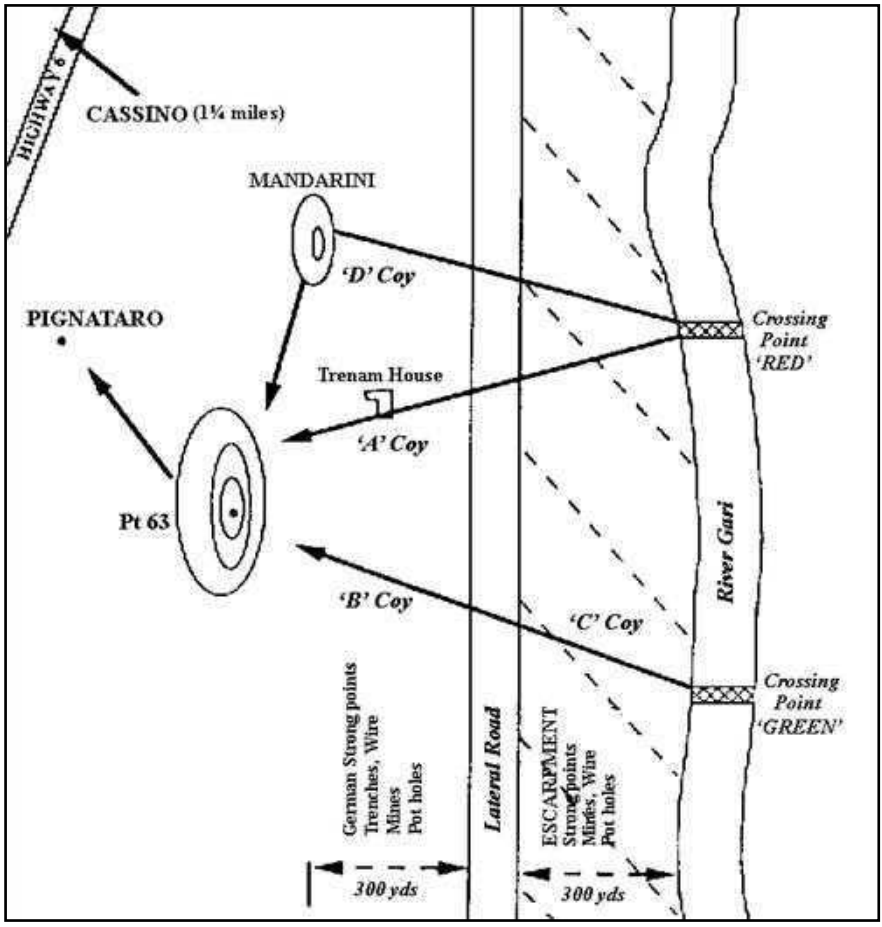
The main attack was to be launched by XIII British Corps in the Liri Valley, towards the west of Cassino. The two leading divisions were to secure a bridgehead over River Gari between Cassino and River Liri, which would then be exploited by the rest of the corps. In the meantime, II Polish Corps would strike from north across the mountains behind Cassino and join up with XIII Corps in the Liri Valley, thus isolating Cassino, which would then be cleared. With the Gustav Line breached, the Allies would then advance up the Liri Valley on Route 6 towards Rome. The operations would be assisted by diversionary attacks by X British Corps on the right and II US Corps on the left. Meanwhile, VI Corps would break out of the Anzio bridgehead towards Valmontone on Route 6.[38]

The Liri River Valley, bearing northwest of Cassino, lies between the Monte Cairo-Cassino massif and the Aurunci Range, and is from four to seven miles wide. Route 6 winds through the valley on the left side of the river. River Rapido, which passes in front of Cassino, is called River Gari below the town. Where the Gari and the Liri join, a small apex of land is enclosed, known as the Liri Appendix. Below the confluence of the two rivers, the channel is known as the River Garigliano. West of Cassino, the Gustav Line followed the course of the Gari and the Garigliano. The Gari itself was a formidable obstacle, being forty feet wide, six to eight feet deep and swift flowing. Seven miles behind the



37. The Cassino Front.

Gari, a subsidiary line of defence in the Liri Valley was known as the Hitler Line. It was actually a part of the Gustav Line defences since the intervening area was one continuous system of interconnected strong-points, reinforced bunkers, concrete gun emplacements, armoured pill boxes, tank obstacles, barbed wire entanglements and minefields.[39]



38. The 3/8th Punjab Plan of Attack across the River Gari.

The XIII Corps front extended seven miles from the Liri Appendix to Cassino, with the 8th Indian Division on the left, up to the town of San Angelo, and the 4th British Division on the right, astride Route 6. The 19th Brigade on the left of 8th Division was to strike across the River Gari, neutralize the Liri Appendix and exploit towards Pignataro, while the 17th Brigade was to reduce San Angelo. Each brigade was supported by a Canadian armoured regiment. The 21st Brigade was in reserve.[40] 3/8th Punjab on the

right of 19th Brigade was to cross the Gari at two points named Green (B & C Companies) and Red (A & D Companies, Battalion HQ). After securing a lateral road 300 yards west of the Gari, A & B Companies would capture Point 63, while D Company would mop up the feature of Mandarini. The battalion would then advance towards the town of Pignataro, supported by Canadian armour.[41]

On the night of 10 May 1944, 3/8th Punjab moved to its assembly area east of the Gari. On its left were the 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had replaced the battered 1/5th Essex. On its right was 1/12th FF of 17th Brigade. The battalion had spent the previous ten days practising river crossing and joint operations with tanks. It had also received some reinforcements to make up for the losses of the previous year but was still under strength. At 2300 hours on 11 May, a tremendous artillery barrage by 800 Allied guns opened up on XIII Corps front. The Germans responded with phosphorus smoke shells. Thick smoke mixed with ground mist and dust covered the entire front, drastically reducing visibility and causing a lot of disorder as the leading companies groped their way to the riverbank. As the battalion concentrated on the riverbank, it suffered forty casualties due to the heavy German fire.[42]

At 2345 hours, A Company under Captain Trenam and B Company under Major R Wright launched their boats from their designated beaches and crossed the river. However, in the strong current, one platoon of A Company was swept downstream and landed in B Company's area, while the boat carrying B Company Commander was also carried downstream and landed some distance away. On the return journey, most of the boats were swept away by the strong current while others were damaged due to enemy fire. The troops on Green Beach salvaged one boat and then crossed by pulling it forwards and backwards after securing the boat by ropes. Meanwhile on Red Beach, the remaining men

crossed over on hastily built rafts. By 0630 hours, the battalion had crossed the river, but it was well behind schedule. The smoke and fog, which had caused so much confusion during the night, now became an asset, as they hid the assaulting troops from the enemy. Under the cover of this smoke screen, the battalion deployed for the assault.[43]

The first wave of A Company on the right, having crossed the river, advanced towards its objective but soon ran into an apron of barbed wire covered by mines. Several casualties occurred and the enemy was alerted. Accurate German fire caused heavy casualties including Captain Trenam, who was badly wounded in both legs. He collected the surviving fifteen men with him and pushed through a gap in the wire towards some cover about thirty yards beyond the lateral road. Here, the party halted. The Company Commander was too weakened by loss of blood to move any further. Only eight men remained with him now and he ordered them to dig in. An enemy counterattack was repulsed and several Germans were killed. As dawn broke, the men found themselves completely isolated. Battle raged all around, but no support came. The party was now reduced to three and ammunition was running out. Captain Trenam felt that it was suicidal to resist any longer and ordered his men to surrender but they refused. The wounded officer, almost unconscious by now, had to threaten them, and reluctantly, they complied.[44]

On the B Company front, Subedar Sumera Ram took over command of the company. The C Company under Major Girdhari Singh soon followed, while the Battalion HQ landed towards their right. The situation was very confused; remnants of A were mixed up with B and all contact had been lost with D Company. As the battalion advanced, it came up against the strongest part of the escarpment; twenty feet high and held by a series of strongpoints, each manned by a platoon. There was little or no cover; the battalion was pinned down by murderous German fire and could

advance no further. Casualties began to mount and the wounded could not be evacuated. The Regimental Medical Officer had been wounded before the crossing and the casualties remained unattended; many of whom died. All communication had broken down. As the mist lifted around noon, a line of Canadian tanks was seen approaching. "It is difficult to know who was more surprised, the attackers or the defenders".[45] The tanks had crossed the river over a span of Bailey bridge carried on the back of a tank, which had then driven into the river while another tank pushed the span from behind. It was an ingenious bit of mechanical improvisation and probably saved the day for the Allies.[46]

About this time, the B Company Commander asked for a volunteer to deal with a particularly troublesome machine gun post towards the right. Sepoy Kamal Ram, a twenty-year-old Gujar in action for the first time, came forward. "Kamal Ram crawled through the wire and leapt upon the gun crew single-handed. He shot the gunner and bayoneted his feeder, swinging about to kill a German officer who sprang at him from a slit trench firing a pistol. With the post silenced, he pressed on. Having sniped the gunner of a second nest, he bombed the remainder of the crew into submission. Together with a havildar he attacked a third machine gun post and dealt with it in a similar fashion. The line was open. The Punjabis moved forward to secure their objective. Later, in a forward reconnaissance, Kamal Ram wiped out a fourth machine gun nest",[47] killing a German and bringing back two more as prisoners. The fearless sepoy was awarded the Victoria Cross for his incredible feat of gallantry and heroism.

The arrival of armour had been most timely. Under the covering fire of tanks, German strongpoints were rushed and overwhelmed. Major Girdhari Singh personally led the assault of C Company on the German strongpoint towards the left. Attacking with grenades and his Tommy gun, he crossed the wire and threw grenades into the trench. Nine Germans surrendered to him. His

men followed up and the post was captured with twenty-two Germans inside. Major Girdhari Singh was awarded a bar to his Military Cross for yet another display of raw courage and inspiring leadership under fire.[48]

Meanwhile, on the right of B Company, Captain P Crook, the Adjutant and Lieutenant RT King, the Intelligence Officer, volunteered to take a reconnaissance party and establish contact with D Company. Lieutenant King was killed by enemy fire, but the Adjutant was able to gather a few stragglers of D Company. Unable to find D Company, he returned to the Battalion Headquarters, having repulsed a minor German counterattack. As the Canadian tanks approached, Captain Crook attacked the nearest German strongpoint with ten men of the Battalion Headquarters. Several Germans were killed, while the rest surrendered. The gallant officer was awarded the Military Cross.[49]

D Company under Major Sujan Singh moved towards its objective on the right of A Company at 0630 hours. Locating their first objective, the company "charged the German positions in line abreast. It was a gallant but futile charge". A few yards short of the position, "a belt of wire halted them, and four covering machine guns opened up at point-blank range. Major Sujan Singh, who led the charge, fell dead. One platoon, which by the impetus of its rush had penetrated the position, was wiped out to a man. They were afterwards found lying under the muzzles of the machine guns". A second attack led by Jemadar Gharib Singh captured the ridge, but only thirty men were left in the company. All contact with the rest of the battalion had been lost and was not restored until the battalion objectives had been taken.[50]

In the meantime, Major Wright, who had been swept away during the crossing of the river, was having adventures of his own. He landed some distance downstream with a platoon and waited in vain for the rest of the company to join him. When nothing happened, he set off in search of his company, only to lose contact

in the dark with his party. After stumbling through the darkness all night and dodging German sentries, the officer finally made contact with some Canadian tanks that had crossed over. The Canadians were astonished to find a lone British officer in the area. They were looking for infantry to support but could not find any and were only too happy to let the major guide them. Major Wright hitched a ride on a tank and was finally reunited with his men in the afternoon. The company had been held up near the lateral road by a German machine gun post. Supported by armour, the company attacked the Germans and forced them to surrender. Moving further up, they came across a farmhouse, where Captain Trenam and his men were being held prisoners. Captain Trenam "could scarcely believe his eyes when he espied Major Wright leading a tank out of the mist. He was not too happy to see the tank stop and fire two inquisitive rounds at the house". But the Germans "did not argue and promptly surrendered". All captured Punjabis were restored to the battalion.[51]

Supported by the tanks, the battalion now stormed Point 63, capturing thirty Germans. All battalion objectives had been secured, although at a terrible cost. Out of the 400 men who had set out the previous night, 256 had become casualties. These included two officers killed and two wounded, 50 ORs killed, 25 missing and 177 wounded.[52] Towards their right, 1/12th FF and 1/5th Gurkhas captured San Angelo on 13 May. The 8th Indian Division had smashed the Gustav Line; and 3/8th Punjab had played a central role in it. American gunners supporting the attack had offered odds of ten to one against the 8th Indian Division forcing the Gari. They did not believe that the division would succeed where they had failed twice in January. Their British colleagues, who knew better, happily accepted the bet—in favour of the 8th Indian Division.[53]

The attack of 4th British Division east of San Angelo had floundered because of their inability to bridge the river. But the

8th Division Engineers were able to throw another bridge over the Gari, which was then used by the 78th Division to breakout into the Liri Valley. On 15 May, the 8th Indian Division turned the Cassino position from the flank by capturing Pignataro. Three days later, the Poles linked up with 78th Division on Route 6, after having stormed Monte Cassino, thus completing the destruction of Gustav Line. The German situation was precarious. They rushed four divisions southwards and tried to regroup on the Hitler Line. But on 23 May, the Eighth Army smashed the Hitler Line. The Germans were now in headlong retreat.

It was the perfect opportunity for VI Corps to breakout of Anzio and bag the entire German Tenth Army in the Liri Valley. But the Americans were more interested in the glory of being first to enter Rome. The VI Corps, instead of cutting off the German line of retreat, advanced north towards Rome, allowing the German divisions in the Liri Valley to escape the pursuing Eighth Army. The Americans entered Rome on 4 June. Two days later, the Allies invaded Normandy and the spotlight shifted from Italy. The Germans recovered quickly, and after conducting a skilful withdrawal, they safely brought the bulk of their troops out of Central Italy. By 18 June, they had retreated 225 miles north to their next line of defence—the Gothic Line.

The 8th Indian Division was in the van of pursuit of the retreating Germans and fought numerous small actions with the enemy rearguard. On 26 May, a column made up of C Company, 3/8th Punjab and a squadron of 6th Lancers with some tanks caught up with a party of German paratroopers in the Melfa Gorge. Twenty-five Germans were killed and fourteen were taken prisoner. Four days later, passing through Arce, the battalion crossed the River Liri south of Fontana Liri Inferiore and moved towards Monte Santa Giovanni and Cle Lucinetta. Here, it was involved in a firefight with a German rearguard on 31 May and suffered 28 casualties.[54] Jemadar Ghazan Khan was awarded the

Military Cross for capturing two German MG posts on 31 May. With four men, the gallant VCO charged the enemy, killing three and capturing one, while the rest fled, leaving behind their weapons.[55] Next day, the battalion moved to Veroli in support of 6/13th FF Rifles, but the Germans evacuated the town without a fight. The battalion now went into rest south of Veroli.

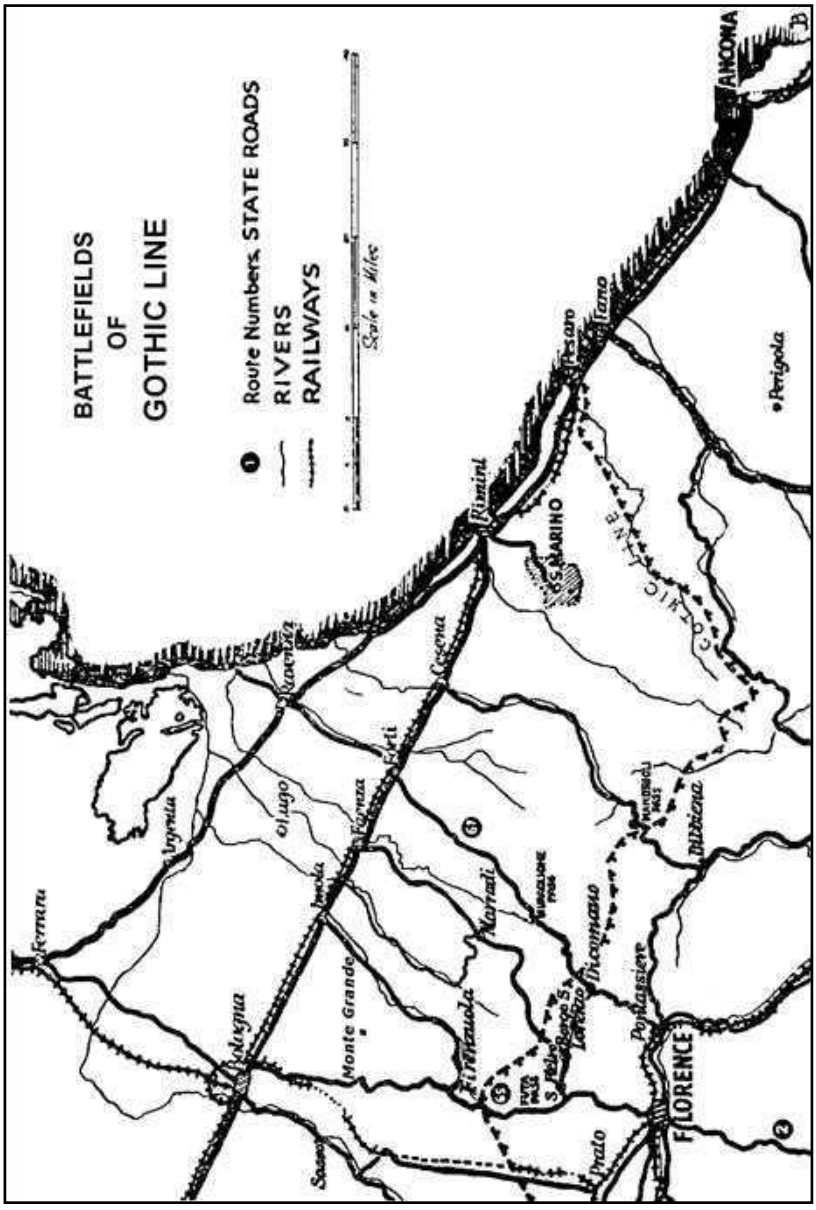
The Action of Bastia: Throughout the first two weeks of June, the Germans retreated across Central Italy, until they reached the foothills of Apennine Mountains near Lake Trasimene. North of the lake, the Apennine massif becomes more rugged with steep slopes and higher crests. It was ideal terrain for defence and the Germans paused to make a stand. On 17 June, 3/8th Punjab was back in line, with orders to capture the town of Bastia, southwest of Assisi. Ahead of them, 6th Lancers were reconnoitring the position when they were ambushed, short of the bridge over River Chiascio. The Germans destroyed three armoured cars and blew up the bridge. 3/8th Punjab debussed at Santa Maria Angeli and advanced towards its objective, with B Company approaching from southwest and A Company from northeast. Strong enemy resistance was encountered by B Company, which suffered three killed and twenty wounded, about half of them from own artillery. At 1500 hours, B Company captured Bastia. However, the Germans were still holding Bastiola on the other side of the river. Colonel Sandison trained all his tanks and anti-tank guns on the Germans at point-blank range and tried to blast them out of Bastiola. Meanwhile, at 1700 hours, D Company crossed the river in heavy rain. The rest of the battalion followed and by nightfall, the Germans had been evicted from the town.[56]

As 8th Division advanced towards River Arno west of Florence, 3/8th Punjab moved to Siena for a presentation parade. On 26 July, King George VI presented the ribbon of Victoria Cross to Sepoy Kamal Ram after inspecting the battalion guard of honour. Two days later, the battalion was back in line south and

east of Florence. It was a period of aggressive patrolling by both sides. On 25 August, the battalion crossed the River Arno, largely unopposed. A few minor brushes with Germans took place and some prisoners were captured. The battalion had now come up against the Gothic Line, where the Germans intended to stand and fight.[57]

The Gothic Line: North of River Arno, the Apennine Mountains form a solid barrier from coast to coast, and except for the small coastal strip of the Adriatic Sea, block all approaches to northern Italy. The Germans had chosen this formidable natural barrier as their next line of defence. It was called the Gothic Line. The defences had been prepared by the Germans for months and stretched 130 miles from Pesaro on the Adriatic Coast to La Spezia on the Gulf of Genoa. North and northeast of Florence, the Gothic Line was screened by the rugged mountains around Monte Calvana.

The Eighth Army had returned to the Adriatic Coast, leaving XIII Corps and 8th Indian Division under command of the Fifth Army. In August 1944, the Allies launched their assault on the Gothic Line. While the Eighth Army was trying to force its way on the coast, the Fifth Army, with II US Corps on the left and XIII British Corps on the right, crossed the Arno and closed up to the Gothic Line. By 8 September, the 8th Indian Division had captured the mountain positions around Monte Calvana and was in front of the Gothic Line. On 13 September, II Corps attacked Il Giogo Pass and broke through German defences. On their right, XIII Corps attacked along the Marradi road towards Faenza. By 16 September, the 8th Division had broken through the Gothic Line. As the 1st British and 6th Armoured Divisions advanced through the passes, the 8th Indian Division was given the task of clearing the Germans from the trackless mountains in the central sector, while protecting the flanks of the other two divisions.



39. The Gothic Line.

The mission of 19th Indian Brigade was to protect the left flank of 6th Armoured Division, which was advancing up Route 67 towards the Marradi Valley. On 30 September, 3/8th Punjab was ordered to capture the feature east of Marradi road up to Monte Casalino. On 1 October, B Company secured the village of Dogara, while C Company captured Monte L'Alto without any opposition. Next day, A Company secured Point 601. The weather had turned bad and it started raining heavily. At 0700 hours on 3 October, D Company moved off to capture the high ground south of Point 605 on Monte Cavallara, which was thought to be unoccupied. But as the company neared the spur, it came under heavy fire from three sides—Cavallara House, Point 711 and Point 714, and was pinned down.[58]

The Commanding Officer ordered C Company to clear Point 711 and A Company to capture Cavallara House. C Company secured its objective but suffered some casualties in the process. Meanwhile, the A Company attack was to commence at 1500 hours under a smoke screen. It was to be carried out by No. 9 Platoon under Jemadar Ant Ram over 400 yards of flat, open and un-reconnoitred ground. At 1455 hours, the smoke barrage commenced but overshot by a hundred yards. A frantic message was sent to stop the attack, but it was too late; the platoon was already on its way—smoke screen or no smoke screen. The platoon covered the open ground at the double and well spread out. "Hell was let loose from three sides as machine guns coughed and sent bullets whipping towards the sturdy men of 3/8 Punjab. Not a man hesitated; before the Germans realized what was happening, the Punjabis were inside the house. Six German prisoners, dazed by the audacity of the charge, sat down and wondered what had hit them". The platoon had suffered only one casualty.[59]

The men settled down to wait for the inevitable German counterattack, which came after heavy artillery and mortar fire. The attack was beaten back after inflicting heavy casualties on the

Germans. But Jemadar Ant Ram had been seriously wounded, and the platoon had run out of ammunition. Lance Havildar Bhup Singh now took over command, and using captured German weapons, repulsed two more German counterattacks. In the last attack, the Germans were able to penetrate and occupy part of the house. Bhup Singh and his men rushed the infiltrators, killing or capturing all of them. By morning, the platoon had been reduced to half its original number, and it was ordered to withdraw. Jemadar Ant Ram was awarded the Military Cross and Lance Havildar Bhup Singh the IDSM for their feats of heroism.[60]

During the night 3/4 October, A & D Companies were withdrawn. All operations were postponed for two days due to heavy rains. On 7 October, the 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were ordered to take Monte Cavallara, while 3/8th Punjab were to capture Monte Casalino. At 0700 hours on 7 October, 3/8th Punjab thrust forward on the ridge connecting Monte Cavallara with Monte Casalino. A Company captured Point 605 in the face of strong enemy opposition. One VCO and five men were killed, but the speed of the attack had taken the Germans by surprise. A German counterattack was easily repulsed. B Company then attacked Point 655 after passing through A Company. After overcoming fierce German resistance, the company took its objective just before noon. Meanwhile, C Company was held up in front of Point 606 but took it early on 8 October. Further advance towards Monte Casalino was prevented by intense German fire.[61]

At 0500 hours on 10 October, B Company, advancing from Point 605, "hurled itself against the strongly guarded position of Monte Casalino. The attackers were met by heavy automatic weapon fire, when they reached the German defences. Approaches to Monte Casalino were very steep, muddy and slippery and most of the weapons were rendered useless by mud". The two forward platoons suffered heavy casualties and covered by the third

platoon, withdrew about 500 yards in the rear.[62] Sepoy Lahore Ram greatly distinguished himself by covering the withdrawal of his platoon with his LMG. Alone and wounded, he continued to fire his weapon and refused to fall back until all the wounded had been evacuated. He was awarded the IDSM for his courage and devotion.[63]

The Germans launched three successive counterattacks, the last of which succeeded in breaking into the position held by Jemadar Des Raj and his platoon. Bitter hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The enemy was finally driven back after suffering heavy losses. Jemadar Des Raj was awarded the Military Cross for leading the gallant defence of the position.[64] The company had suffered forty casualties including fifteen killed, but it held on to its position. On 16 October, the battalion, having suffered 100 casualties, was withdrawn to Vicchio for rest and refit. Eight days later, it moved into brigade reserve near Marradi.[65]

The Defence of Monte Grande: In early December, the 19th Indian Brigade was rushed to Monte Grande, ten miles southeast of Bologna, as reinforcement for the 1st British Division. The area had been captured by the Fifth Army in its autumn offensive and was of vital strategic importance because of its commanding location near Bologna and the Po Valley. It was a towering feature, rising 2000 feet above the Sillaro River Valley, with very steep sides and a narrow escarpment. The Germans were very keen to regain it and had despatched their best troops, the 1st Parachute Division to capture it.

By 6 December, the 19th Brigade was in position on the right of the British, with 3/8th Punjab astride Monte Grande itself. It was a difficult time. The entire area was under enemy fire, and the threat of snipers was ever-present. The troops were forced to huddle in their slit trenches, wet and cold from the miserable weather. A heavy mist usually covered the area, providing an eerie backdrop to the standoff. Due to the narrow escarpment, defence in

depth was not possible. Although subjected to intermittent artillery and mortar fire, the real threat came at night, when German patrols moved out for the kill. In turn, the 19th Brigade sent out patrols of its own.[66]

On the night of 10 December, after an intense mortar fire, a strong German patrol of about forty paratroopers raided a house near La Dogatia, jointly held by men from B Company 3/8th Punjab and 6th Gordon Highlanders. The enemy attacked from two sides. The Punjabis repulsed the attack from the southeast, but the other group managed to set the house on fire with a bazooka in order to flush the garrison out. Twelve Punjabis were wounded and an officer of the Gordons was killed before the Germans pulled out, taking with them eight captured Highlanders. Two days later, the Germans launched a major attack on the 19th Brigade front. It was directed against the Argylls and the Piffers on either side of 3/8th Punjab. After some bitter fighting, the attack was repulsed with heavy losses to the Germans. By 21 December, the threat had sufficiently receded for the brigade to be withdrawn from Monte Grande.[67]

Scarcely had the brigade arrived back, when the 8th Division was ordered to rush to the other side of Italy to counter a new threat. In the Tuscany uplands north of Pisa, the front had been relatively quiet. In the Serchio Valley, the frontline was held by the 92nd US Division facing a second-line German formation. The area was of vital importance to the Americans as their main supply line from the port of Leghorn passed through the Serchio Valley. In mid-December, the Americans received intelligence that Germans were planning some activity in the sector. On 22 December, the 8th Division with 19th and 21st Brigades, was ordered to move to Lucca in the Serchio Valley to counter the developing German threat.[68]

Early on 26 December, the Germans launched their attack, and the American division simply disintegrated. The 19th Indian

Brigade moved up and took up blocking positions as the retreating Americans passed through. 3/8th Punjab was deployed on the right flank of the brigade, near Bagni di Lucca, where it dug in, and waited for the enemy. But the Germans never came. Either they were surprised by the precipitate American withdrawal and suspected a trap, or their attack had only been a local one. By morning, they had withdrawn to their original line as speedily as the Americans had vacated theirs. The 8th Division then took over the abandoned American frontline. After a pleasant sojourn in the picturesque Serchio Valley, the division went into a well-deserved rest near Pisa, with 3/8th Punjab billeted at Castel Maggiore.[69]

The Assault across the Senio and the Santerno: The Allied autumn offensive of 1944 had failed to achieve the desired goals. The Germans had stubbornly held on, but it was a losing enterprise and they knew it. The Gothic Line had been breached; the Eighth Army had reached the River Senio; and the Fifth Army was poised to strike towards Bologna. By April 1945, the Allies were ready to finish off the Germans in Italy. Their plan was to strike across the River Senio with the Eighth Army on a four corps front and make for the plains of northern Italy through the Argenta Gap. In the meantime, the Fifth Army would thrust towards Bologna, thus trapping the entire German Army between the two.

In the plains north of the Apennines, the sluggish flow of Italian rivers instead of eroding the land tended to silt it. As a result, flood banks had been constructed on both sides of the rivers to prevent flooding of the surrounding areas. These flood banks with their steep sides were natural obstacles. The Germans, with their usual ingenuity and thoroughness, had converted River Senio into a formidable fortress. The ramparts of the flood banks had been converted into elaborate fortifications interconnected by tunnels. The mutually supporting gun pits covered a wide front of the flat and open ground. The entire position was protected by belts of barbed wire and minefields. All bridges had been destroyed and

the troops on the far bank maintained communications with footbridges that could be swung back. The narrow dykes presented a very small target to the air force and the artillery, while the steep slopes of the ramparts made bridging the rivers a difficult proposition.[70]

Under different circumstances, the Germans might have had a reasonable chance of success. But the circumstances had changed. The Allies enjoyed complete control of the air and overwhelming superiority on the ground. With Germany herself about to be overrun, the morale of the battered German troops in Italy was very low. The Allies were confident of victory. The 8th Indian Division was again chosen to breach the German line. The division had reverted to the Eighth Army in February and now formed part of V Corps. Its mission was to attack the Senio defences, cross the river and then establish a bridgehead across the River Santerno, *six miles beyond the Senio,* with its flanks unprotected throughout. The assault was to be made on a two-brigade front, with 21st Brigade on the left and 19th Brigade on the right. After crossing the Senio, the two leading brigades would continue up to the Santerno and establish a bridgehead over the river. The 17th Brigade would then pass through to secure and enlarge the bridgehead. Each brigade was supported by tanks, flame throwers and mobile guns. The divisional engineers were given the task of constructing five bridges over the Senio within eight hours of its capture.[71] It was a daunting task by any standard. But it also showed the high esteem in which the Allied commanders held this magnificent formation.

The assault on the Senio commenced at 1330 hours on 9 April 1945. After an intense four-hour bombardment of German positions by artillery and air force, the 8th Indian Division advanced towards the river. On the 19th Brigade front, Argylls and Piffers led the way, closely followed by 3/8th Punjab. On reaching the river, flame throwers doused the enemy defences with a curtain

of fire and under the cover of heavy tank, mortar and machine gun fire, the infantry charged the dazed Germans. After an intense firefight, the near bank was captured and 3/8th Punjab passed through. The battalion rapidly crossed the river, which was about four feet deep, and assaulted the far bank. The Germans were reeling from the pounding they had taken, and the far bank was taken against light opposition. The battalion then constructed two footbridges under heavy mortar fire. Meanwhile, the engineers were busy throwing bridges over the river. At 0415 hours on 10 April, the first tanks crossed the Senio. The 21st Brigade on the left had a stickier time, but by early morning, they too were through.[72]

By the morning of 10 April, the 8th Indian Division had smashed the Senio defences and was well-established across the river. The defeated Germans were streaming north towards their next prepared positions on the River Santerno, with Allied aircraft harassing them all the way. That evening, the chase was renewed. It was the turn of 3/8th Punjab to lead the charge on the Santerno. At 2130 hours, the battalion attacked the canal of Scolo Tratturo, a switch line position to the Senio defences, where 6/13th FF Rifles had been facing stiff German resistance. With A Company on the right and D on the left, the German position was soon overrun.[73] Captain PC Seyler, the Mortar Platoon Commander, played havoc with his self-propelled mortars. This gallant officer had been extremely busy throughout the battle, bringing down deadly and accurate fire on the enemy and was awarded the Military Cross for his excellent work.[74]

After the capture of Scolo Tratturo, Naik Thakar Singh of D Company was ordered to clear a strongly held enemy position near a blown bridge on the main road. In the face of heavy machine gun fire, Thakar Singh with five men of his section charged the enemy across fifty yards of open ground and captured the position. Two Germans including an officer were killed while

twelve were taken prisoner. Naik Thakar Singh was awarded the Military Medal.[75]

Meanwhile, a party of about ten Germans launched a counterattack to destroy a footbridge held by Naik Mohammad Sadiq and his section on the right of A Company. Naik Sadiq and two men immediately charged the Germans, firing their Tommy guns as they crossed the bridge. The enemy attack was broken up by this unexpected charge and four Germans with a machine gun took shelter in a nearby trench and started firing on the bridge. Leaving his men to guard the bridge, the gallant NCO stalked the enemy and then rushed the position, Tommy gun blazing. The German machine gunner was killed. His ammunition having run out, Naik Sadiq then killed another German with a grenade. The remaining two Germans fled, closely followed by Naik Sadiq, who beat them with his Tommy gun, forcing them to surrender. Naik Mohammad Sadiq was awarded the Military Medal for his action.[76]

Having cleared Scolo Tratturo of the Germans, 3/8th Punjab resumed its advance towards the Santerno, mopping up enemy rearguards. By 0900 hours on 11 April, its patrols had reached the eastern bank of River Santerno, where they encountered fierce opposition. The 17th Brigade now joined the battle and passed through the battalion to establish a bridgehead across the river. The battalion, after a short rest, took up position at San Giani to protect the right flank of the division.[77] That afternoon, the battalion was heavily shelled, and the Battalion Headquarters received two direct hits. Lieutenant Abdul Malik Khan was killed while four other officers and several ORs were wounded.[78]

Next day, the battalion moved out and cleared the enemy from the area of San Bernardino. Jemadar Gul Mohammad took out several fighting patrols to mop up German posts still holding out, while Naik Fazal Khan, the Assault Pioneer Platoon Commander cleared the routes by lifting mines under heavy enemy

fire. Throughout the course of the battle, this remarkably brave NCO with nerves of steel had performed his dangerous duties with dedication and total disregard for his own safety. He was awarded the IDSM for his cool courage and devotion to duty.[79]

On 13 April, the 78th British Division crossed the Santerno and dashed towards the Argenta Gap. The 8th Indian Division had accomplished its mission. It had smashed the enemy defences with such speed and power that the Germans were left reeling. Heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy, more than a thousand of whom were captured. The Germans never recovered from the blow. Over the next few days, two German armies were annihilated by Allied formations pouring in from north and south. The 8th Division was pulled out for rest. Major General Dudley Russell, the Division Commander remarked, "Two rivers crossed in forty eight hours, is not a bad achievement, even for 8th Indian Division".[80]

On 21 April, the 8th Indian Division was back in line. Led by 3/8th Punjab, the division passed through the Argenta Gap and moved towards Ferrara, on its way to the crossings over River Po. After taking the village of San Nicolo Ferrarese, the battalion pushed on, and by midday on 22 April, it had reached Gaibanella on the outskirts of Ferrara. Here, the division encountered stiff resistance from some German Panzers. While the 19th Brigade pinned the Panzers down, the 21st Brigade bypassed the town, reaching the Po next day. As the engineers threw bridges over the river, German troops between Ferrara and the Po were mopped up.[81]

On 25 April, the division started crossing the Po and advanced towards the next river, the Adige. The Germans were surrendering everywhere and there was confusion all around, with huge traffic jams at crossing points. Two days later, the 19th Brigade moved across the Adige, while on 28 April, 3/8th Punjab crossed the River Ripo and moved to Fratta. It was the

last river it would cross in Italy. By now, all organized German resistance had ceased.[82] On 29 April, the German Commander in Italy signed the instrument of surrender. Nine days later, the war in Europe ended with the surrender of Germany.

The performance of 3/8th Punjab in Italy was nothing short of spectacular. The battalion took part in most of the decisive battles of the campaign and carried out the missions assigned to it with remarkable professionalism and *élan*. Its officers and men fought with ferocious determination and courage, as attested by the numerous gallantry awards won by them. The battalion won six Battle Honours to go with the Campaign Honour for Italy. Four of these were against the formidable German paratroopers. Four times the battalion met them in battle; and each time the paratroopers were outfought by the indomitable 8th Punjabis. But the campaign had also exacted a terrible price. The battalion suffered 1288 casualties in Italy, including 304 killed in action; nine of them officers.[83] In July 1945, 3/8th Punjab returned home and was stationed at Malthone. It left for another stint in Iraq in August 1946, returning to India on 7 June 1947. At the time of independence, the battalion was stationed at Allahabad.[84]

12
Trial and Triumph in Burma

No campaign of the Second World War exemplifies the role of the British Indian Army more than the war in Burma. Indian formations formed the bulk of the Fourteenth Army, making the Burmese Campaign "the Indian Army's war". Perhaps that is why, like the Mesopotamian Campaign of the previous war, this tremendous clash of arms has been largely ignored in the West. Even during the war, men of the Fourteenth Army had started calling themselves the "Forgotten Army". However, the achievements of the Forgotten Army were nothing short of an epic. With a 700-mile front, the Fourteenth Army was the largest in the world. And led by one of the finest generals of the war—William Slim—it defeated the Japanese largely on its own. Rising from the ashes of defeat like a phoenix, the Fourteenth Army routed the Japanese Army in "the most brilliant offensive campaign mounted by the British in World War II".[1] The award of thirty-one Victoria Crosses in Burma out of a hundred for the entire war is a testament to the valour and sacrifice of the men of the Forgotten Army.

The Japanese war aim in 1941 was to form a security ring around Japan. To achieve this, they intended to destroy the American fleet at Pearl Harbour and then conquer a wide swathe of territory extending from the Pacific Ocean to the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya and Burma. Burma was especially important for the Japanese because it was the only conduit of Western military aid to the Chinese. Conquest of Burma would "complete their capture of the western gateways to China, and the Pacific—thus completing the great defensive barrier visualised in their strategic design".[2]

In December 1941, the Japanese Fifteenth Army landed in Siam. After covering the advance of the Twenty-fifth Army into

Malaya, the Fifteenth Army was to invade and conquer Burma. Like Malaya, the British were also totally unprepared in Burma. Their forces consisted of some newly raised Burmese units supported by one Indian infantry brigade and two British battalions. These were reinforced in January 1942 by the half-trained and incomplete 17th Indian Division, and later, by the 7th Armoured Brigade. There were only 37 aircraft available to meet the strong Japanese Air Force. Despite some gallant and stubborn resistance, the British were unable to withstand the Japanese onslaught, and by May, had retreated a thousand miles to the Indian frontier. Although they suffered heavy casualties, but unlike Malaya, the British were able to get away with the bulk of their forces intact.

Burma is a large country, about quarter of a million square miles in size, with over half of it covered by forest. It is surrounded on three sides by inaccessible jungle-clad mountains and has a two thousand miles long coastline. Three great rivers running from north to south drain the country: the Sittang, the Salween, and the mighty Irrawaddy. In 1942, the main roads and railways ran along the rivers, with few lateral communications. As a result, all military operations perforce had to be conducted on a north-south axis. The five-month long monsoon, which turns the country into a quagmire, was a further hindrance to mobility and supply. Air supply was the key to victory in trackless Burma, and in the end, successful supply of the British forces by air proved to be decisive. But a difficult topography and an adverse climate were not the only enemies of the troops fighting in Burma; tropical diseases like dysentery, typhus, jungle sores and above all, malaria, took a terrible toll on both sides.

In March 1942, Lieutenant General William Slim took over command of British forces in Burma. As the exhausted troops arrived back in India, he immediately set about to reorganize and revitalize his forces. However, he was faced with some very

difficult problems. The first was the lack of logistic infrastructure in Assam and Bengal like airfields, roads, railways and stores. The second was the lack of war materiel, and the third was the shortage of well-trained troops. The Indian Army was rapidly expanding, but its troops were still raw and untested in battle, and it was severely handicapped by a shortage of experienced officers and NCOs. Even though their forces were not fully prepared for war, the British decided to go on the offensive as soon as possible. Accordingly, in the summer of 1942, a limited campaign was planned in the Arakan as a first step towards the reconquest of Burma.

Three 8th Punjabi battalions fought in the First Arakan Campaign. 2/8th and 5/8th Punjab were old Burma hands, while the newly raised 8/8th Punjab was about to get its baptism of fire. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a most trying experience for all three battalions, who suffered heavy losses in the doomed campaign. The first to arrive on the front was 5/8th Punjab under Lieutenant Colonel RM Gore. It joined the 14th Indian Division in March 1942, as part of 47th Indian Infantry Brigade, and was employed in guarding the eastern frontier of Bengal at Comilla, Feni and Chittagong.[3]

8/8th Punjab arrived in Bengal with the 4th Indian Infantry Brigade in March 1942 and joined the newly raised 26th Indian Division in May. The battalion remained employed on internal security and cyclone relief duties until March 1943, when it moved to the Arakan Front under the command of Lieutenant Colonel WRF Trevelyan.[4] 2/8th Punjab had been stationed at Chitral in NWFP since 1940. In February 1943, the battalion was mobilized for war. The Sikhs were withdrawn from the battalion, and it was now composed of PMs and Gujars in equal proportion. The battalion arrived at Chittagong on 13 February, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel AG Campbell, and in April, it was despatched to the Arakan Front, where it joined 14th Division at

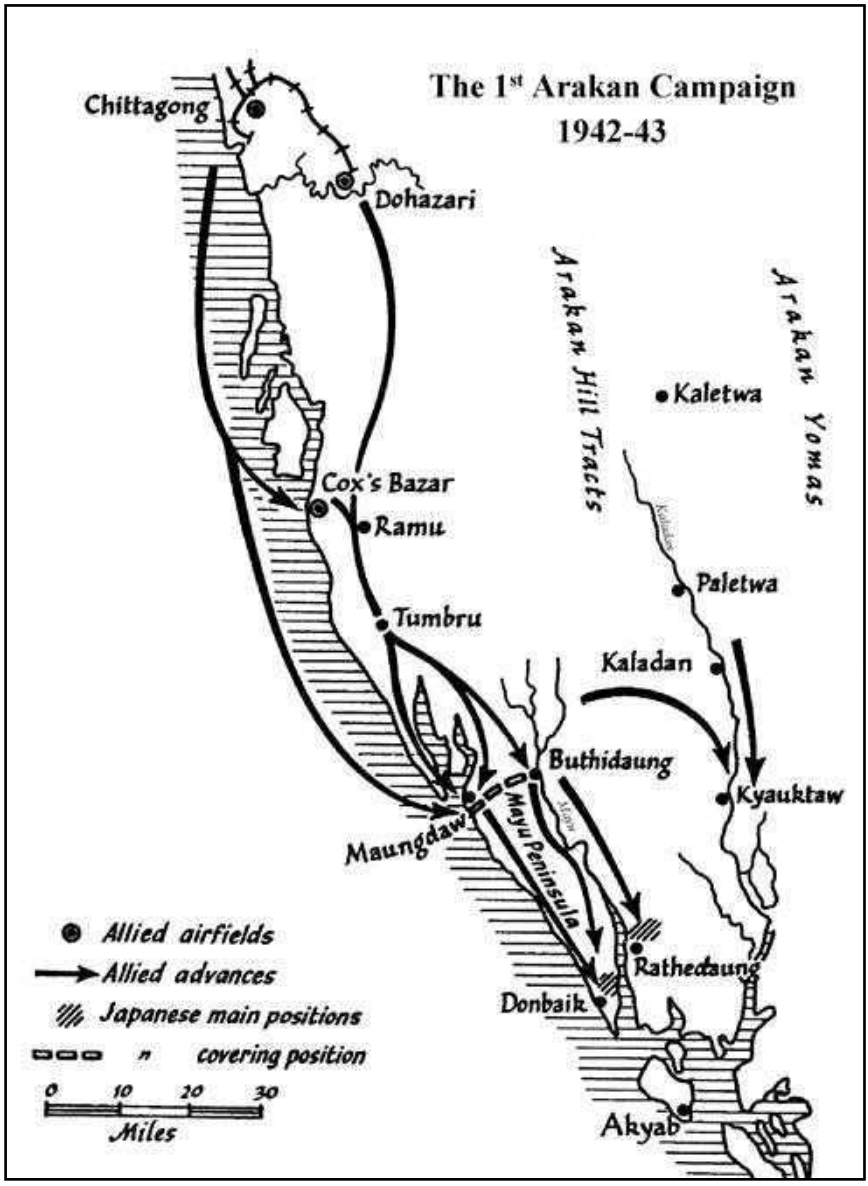
Maungdaw, as divisional reserve.[5] Both the veteran battalions had been milked of experienced officers and men, while 8/8th Punjab was still untested. None of the battalions had received any training in jungle warfare.

First Arakan Campaign 1942-43

The British reorganized their forces in Assam and Bengal as the Eastern Army under Lieutenant General NMS Irwin. It was composed of XV Corps under Lieutenant General Slim and IV Corps under Lieutenant General GAP Scoones. The Arakan offensive of 1942 was under the direct control of General Irwin and had modest aims. Its objective was to capture Akyab Island after clearing the Japanese from the Mayu Peninsula. The Japanese had only a brigade-size force in the Arakan, and it was hoped that with overwhelming superiority, the objective would be attained easily before the onset of monsoons in March. This would not only have a positive impact on the morale of troops but also deny the Japanese the use of the airfield at Akyab.

The 14th Indian Division was given the task of advancing overland from Bengal towards Maungdaw on the Mayu Peninsula as a diversionary attack, while an amphibious force took Akyab from the sea. However, one of the brigades earmarked for the amphibious operation was delayed and the requisite number of assault vessels for the landing could not be found. This resulted in a modification of the plan. Under the new plan, the 14th Indian Division was to capture the entire Mayu Peninsula, which was to be followed by a short-range seaborne assault on Akyab Island from the tip of the peninsula (called Foul Point) by 6th British Brigade.[6]

The Mayu Peninsula is about ninety miles long and some twenty miles wide in the north, from where it tapers to a point south of the village of Donbaik, a short distance north of the Island

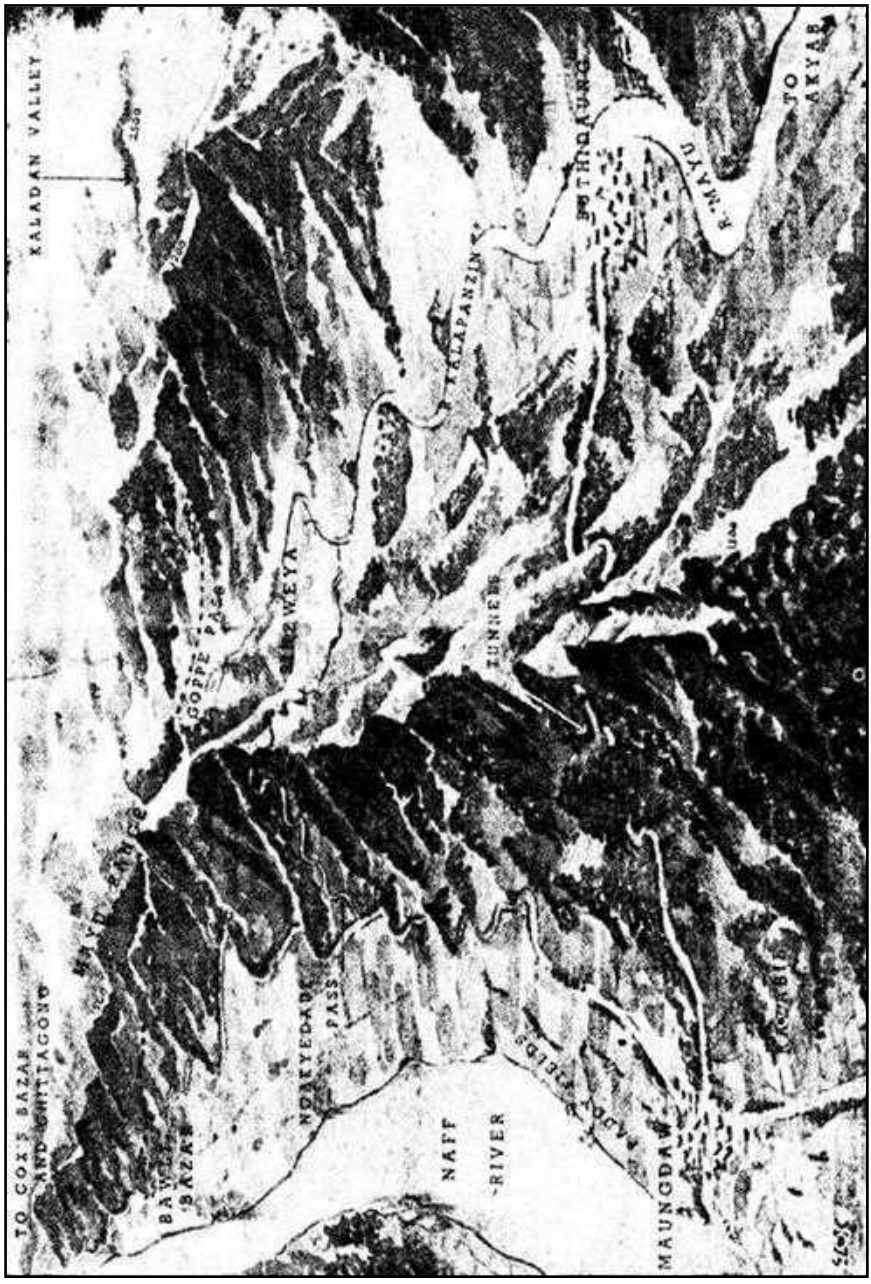


40. The First Arakan Campaign 1942-43.

of Akyab. A 2000-foot-high ridge called the Mayu Range runs down the length of the peninsula. The ridge has precipitous slopes and is covered with thick impassable jungle. Towards the west, it is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a narrow coastal strip of about a thousand yards, while towards its east is the Mayu River Valley. Numerous water channels called *chaungs* cut the narrow strips of land on either side of the ridge. These are mostly tidal on the western side, with high banks at low tide, which become unfordable during high tide. A paved road crossed the Mayu Range between Buthidaung and Maungdaw, passing through two tunnels at the summit of the pass. The Mayu Valley itself is intersected by several heavily forested ridges and is about ten miles wide in the centre. It is separated from the Kaladan River Valley towards the east by the Arakan Hill Tracts.[7]

On 21 September 1942, the 14th Indian Division was ordered to advance towards Maungdaw. By 23 October, patrols of 123rd Brigade had reached Maungdaw, where they clashed with a Japanese covering force deployed on the line Maungdaw-Buthidaung. The 47th Brigade was strung out along the division's line of communication between Ukhia and Dohazari, while the 55th Brigade was in reserve at Chittagong. The division's progress was badly affected by heavy rains, which washed away roads and brought all shipping to a standstill, severely hampering supply and transport. Around this time, the idea of a seaborne attack on Akyab was dropped and the division was ordered to implement the alternative plan with all haste. However, General Irwin was unwilling to commit his troops until his line of communication had improved sufficiently. This caused further delay, and it was not until mid-December that the division began its advance in earnest. The delay allowed the Japanese to withdraw south to a position of their choosing.[8]

On 17 December, the leading troops of 14th Division arrived at Maungdaw and found the town abandoned by the



The Mayu Range.

Japanese. The British then occupied the line Maungdaw-Buthidaung. 5/8th Punjab operating in the area Maungdaw suffered a few casualties in minor engagements with enemy patrols. During one such encounter, a patrol sent to reconnoitre the eastern entrance to Sangan Chaung was ambushed by the Japanese. Sepoy Said Akbar was awarded the IDSM for staying back with a badly wounded comrade despite the presence of the enemy in immediate vicinity. After dressing the man's wounds, he then evacuated him to safety.[9]

On 22 December, the 47th Brigade was ordered to advance on both sides of the Mayu Range and clear it of the enemy, while 123rd Brigade was to move down the eastern side of the Mayu River and capture the village of Rathedaung. A small force (Soutcol) was to operate down the Kaladan Valley to protect the division's flank. 5/8th Punjab moving along the coast reached Indin without any opposition. The Kondan area east of the Mayu Range was held in strength by the enemy, and the battalion was ordered to cross the ridge and capture it. Leaving its Bren gun carrier platoon on the coast, the battalion crossed the range with great difficulty after cutting its way through thick jungle. The attack was launched on 4 January 1943, only to find that the enemy had withdrawn towards Rathedaung. In the meantime, the Japanese hurriedly despatched a battalion from Akyab, with orders to hold Laungchaung and Donbaik, about ten miles north of Foul Point, at all cost.[10]

5/8th Punjab was then ordered to move south and occupy Foul Point. But the battalion's move was delayed due to reports of Japanese landings, and when it arrived on the outskirts of Laungchaung on 6 January, the village was already occupied by the Japanese, who were also well dug in at Donbaik. The battalion was without its mortars and despite repeated attacks, was unable to dislodge the enemy from his well-fortified bunkers.[11] This was the first time that the British had come across the famous Japanese

Bunkers. These were cleverly camouflaged strongpoints made of heavy logs covered by several feet of earth, making them impervious to bombardment. Each bunker was manned by five to twenty men, who were well-supplied with weapons and ammunition. The bunkers were sited in groups to provide mutual protection to each other.[12] For the attacking infantry, it was like entering a killing zone, where it came under fire from at least three directions. Having failed to dislodge the enemy, 5/8th Punjab took up a defensive position at Thayetpyin on 8 January.[13] Meanwhile, the attack of 123rd Brigade on Rathedaung had also met a similar fate.

In the meantime, the carrier platoons of 47th Brigade had been operating freely on the coast. A few enemy patrols were encountered, but these were easily driven off. But on 6 January, the carrier platoon of 5/8th Punjab was attacked by a strong Japanese patrol near Donbaik. Captain Albert Causey, the Platoon Commander, was wounded by grenade splinters and was forced to retire, handing over command of the platoon to Havildar Parkash Singh. Parkash Singh noticed two other carriers bogged down in a *chaung*, and under heavy Japanese fire. The NCO immediately rushed to the rescue of the stricken carriers, calling on their crews to abandon the vehicles and run for safety, while he provided covering fire. When his Bren gunner was wounded, he took control of the gun from him, and charged towards the enemy, driving with one hand and firing the Bren gun with the other. The astonished Japanese scattered to take cover. Parkash Singh continued to follow them and drove them out of their fixed positions. As he returned to pick the crews of the stranded carriers, he came under heavy Japanese fire but calmly rescued all eight men.[14]

Over the next two weeks, the 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers and 1/7th Rajputs, the other two battalions of 47th Brigade, repeatedly attacked Donbaik but failed to dislodge the Japanese. On 19 January, while the two battalions were making yet another

attempt to take Donbaik, the brigade carriers were ordered to advance along the beach in order to draw enemy fire. The carriers were met with anti-tank fire, and several of them were destroyed including that of Captain Causey. The crews of the destroyed vehicles were given up for dead, and the rest of the carriers withdrew. But Havildar Parkash Singh was not ready to abandon them and wanted to see for himself if there were any survivors among the burning wrecks.[15]

Driving down the beach under intense enemy fire, he found Captain Causey and his driver in their badly damaged carrier. Both were seriously wounded, with the driver having lost both his legs. The men were too badly injured to be moved, so Parkash Singh decided to tow their vehicle to safety. Despite the order of his Platoon Commander to go back and save himself, the fearless NCO rigged a makeshift tow chain and secured it to the damaged carrier, all the time exposed to enemy fire. As he tried to tow the vehicle, he found that it would not budge. He again went out to put the vehicle in neutral gear and then towed it back to safety over broken ground. Both carriers were hit by anti-tank rounds, but Parkash Singh remained unperturbed. During the last hundred yards, he got out, and oblivious to the bullets flying around him, sat on top of his carrier with his arms folded—one more act of defiance for the Japanese. For his incredible feats of courage and selfless devotion to duty on 6 and 19 January, Havildar Parkash Singh was awarded the Victoria Cross.[16]

Having failed to breakthrough at Donbaik and Rathedaung, the British started getting anxious and rushed fresh reinforcements south. The 55th Brigade relieved 47th Brigade on the frontline, taking 5/8th Punjab at Laungchaung under its command. A troop of tanks was moved in support of 55th Brigade and the attacks were renewed but the Japanese tenaciously held on to their positions. On 7 March, 5/8th Punjab was pulled out of the frontline for rest, only to return to Donbaik a few days later as part of the 6th British

Brigade, which was to make another attempt to dislodge the Japanese. The last attack on Donbaik was carried out on 19 March, by 6th Brigade with similar results. On 25 March, 5/8th Punjab reverted to its own brigade and moved towards Atet Nanra in the Mayu Valley. By now, the 4th and 71st Brigades of 26th Indian Division had also arrived in the theatre to reinforce the beleaguered 14th Division. But the morale of the troops was seriously affected and had become a major concern. The troops were jumpy and prone to panicky firing at the slightest noise.[17]

In the meantime, the Japanese 55th Division had been concentrating at Akyab. Having fought the British to a standstill, the Japanese now decided to go on the offensive. Early in March, they despatched two columns to take the British in the flank. One column attacked Soutcol in the Kaladan Valley, forcing it to fall back to Buthidaung, while the other broke into the Mayu Valley, and struck behind 123rd Brigade opposite Rathedaung. By 19 March, the Japanese had uncovered the British left flank and were poised to strike across the Mayu Range towards Indin and cut off British forces on the peninsula.[18]

On 25 March, a Japanese force of about two battalions crossed the Mayu River and fell on 47th Brigade's flank. The brigade was strung out over eleven miles and was unable to concentrate for a counterattack. The C Company of 5/8th Punjab at Atet Nanra was attacked from the rear and badly mauled. The Battalion Headquarters and B Company moved in its support and heavy fighting took place. But on 27 March, the Japanese occupied the crest of the range west of Atet Nanra, thus cutting off 47th Brigade's line of communication. The battalion, reinforced by A Company and a company each of the Fusiliers and Rajputs, launched a counterattack and gained some ground but was again pushed back in the face of determined Japanese attacks. On 31 March, the battalion was ordered to withdraw south towards Sinoh with the rest of the brigade. The position of 47th Brigade had

become extremely precarious. In the meantime, 4th Brigade was ordered to concentrate at Hparabyin and attack the Japanese force from the north.[19]

As the British situation had worsened, reinforcements were moved in, and by late March, the bulk of 26th Indian Division was also committed in the Arakan.[20] These included 8/8th Punjab, which move to Maungdaw with 4th Brigade. By 24 March, the battalion had concentrated at Buthidaung after making an arduous journey from Chittagong. Two days later, it moved south towards Hparabyin, followed by the rest of the brigade, to assist the beleaguered 47th Brigade,[21] whose situation was rapidly deteriorating. On 3 April, the Japanese crossed the Mayu Range and cut off the line of communication of 6th and 47th Brigades north of Indin.[22]

Next day at 0400 hours, 8/8th Punjab advanced southwards through the jungle-clad foothills but ran into Japanese bunkers at Kyweda Chaung. Supported by a mountain battery and battalion mortars, D Company attacked the Japanese position from the west at 0930 hours, but the attack failed. A second attack at 1400 hours from the east also failed to make any impression. The battalion came under heavy enemy artillery and machine gun fire, and A Company was pinned to the ground. It suffered heavy casualties including Captain JAF Eastwood, the Company Commander, who was killed. The B Company Commander lost his nerve and had to be relieved of his command. Subedar Man Singh took over the company and was later awarded the IDSM for keeping the men steadfast despite the breakdown of the company commander. During the night, a fighting patrol of the Commando Platoon was sent out to recover the dead but failed to find any bodies. Next day, the battalion was ordered to withdraw. Its casualties during the abortive attack were eight men killed, three missing and twenty-six wounded.[23]

By 5 April, the British situation had become critical. The 4th Brigade with 8/8th Punjab was moved to Gwindaw on the western side of Mayu Range to cover the withdrawal of 6th and 47th Brigades. The two brigades were then ordered to breakout; the 6th Brigade along the coast and the 47th Brigade across the range from Sinoh to Indin. However, during the night, the Japanese attacked both brigades. Although HQ 6th Brigade was overrun, most of the troops were able to escape by moving along the beach. This left the Japanese in control of the western approaches of the Sinoh-Indin track, thus isolating 47th Brigade east of the range. By 7 April, the brigade was completely surrounded. The Brigade Commander then split the brigade into small parties and ordered them to find their way as best as they could. Surprisingly, most of the men were able to escape to safety.[24]

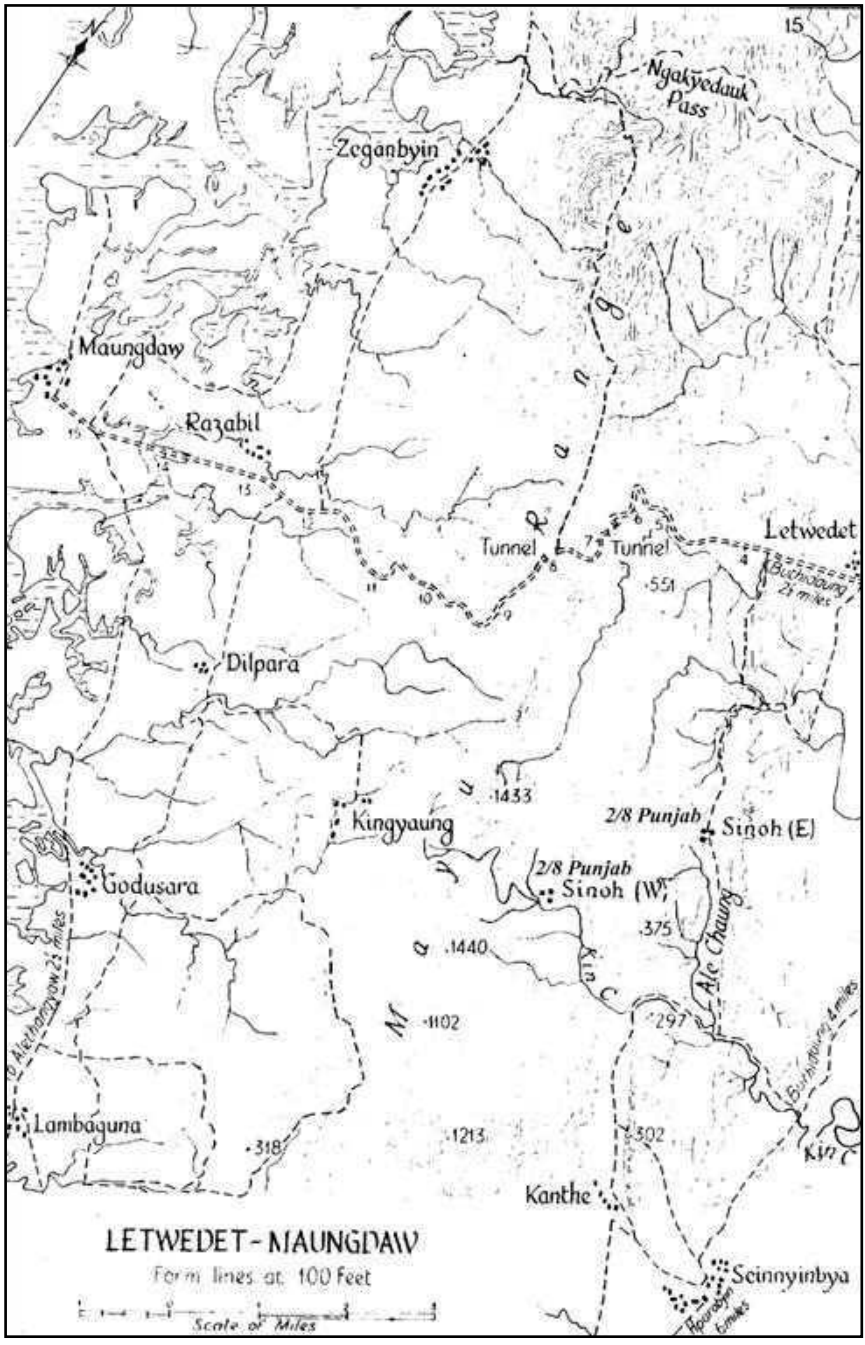
Two parties of about a hundred men from 5/8th Punjab got lost in the jungle. Most of them were able to re-join the battalion but some were captured by the Japanese, including Captain RP Yates, the Adjutant.[25] By then, 2/8th Punjab had arrived at Maungdaw and witnessed the arrival of survivors of the two brigades. Lieutenant Geoff Gregan of 5/8th Punjab brought out a party of Indian and British troops by wading and swimming in the sea almost a mile offshore. “The Indian troops still retained their arms and equipment whereas many of the rank and file of British battalions were completely unencumbered”.[26] The remnants of 5/8th Punjab were withdrawn to Chittagong, where the battalion was reformed. During its ill-fated campaign in the Arakan, the battalion suffered more than 250 casualties, including 119 killed and 102 taken POW. Besides the VC for Parkash Singh, 5/8th Punjab was awarded one IOM, one MC, eight IDSMs and one MM. After a short stay at Ranchi, the battalion moved to Peshawar in May, where it was converted into a Reconnaissance Battalion.[27]

The Japanese now prepared for a major attack to capture the Maungdaw-Buthidaung line and evict the British from the

Mayu Peninsula. All indications were that the attack would come from the eastern side of the Mayu Range, with the Tunnels area as the main objective. In anticipation of the Japanese push, 6th and 4th Brigades were ordered to withdraw northwards, and on 13 April, 8/8th Punjab moved towards Lambaguna. Next day, XV Corps under General Slim took over operational control of the campaign. General Slim's orders were to hold the Maungdaw-Tunnels line.[28]

During the next few days, the Japanese advanced along the Mayu Range. Patrols were active on both sides. The enemy was establishing a chain of posts on tactical features east of the positions held by 4th Brigade in order to turn its flank. One of these was a long low ridge towards the east of 8/8th Punjab called 'Sausage'. On 21 April, Captain JR Woodcock leading a fighting patrol succeeded in occupying the northern end of the ridge. But as the patrol pushed southwards, it came up against a strong Japanese position. Leaving Lieutenant Harbhai Singh Brar with one platoon to hold the northern end of the ridge, the patrol withdrew. But the next day, Lieutenant Brar abandoned his position, which was then occupied by the enemy. On 29 April, an effort was made to reoccupy the ridge and a platoon attack led by Lieutenant Mohammad Akbar Khan succeeded in taking the centre of the ridge. However, a strong Japanese counterattack forced the platoon to withdraw.[29]

The Japanese now modified their plans and decided to move along the crest of the Mayu Range. After securing their flanks, they intended to seize Point 551, immediately east of the Tunnels, which commanded the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road. Capture of the feature would force the British to withdraw from Buthidaung. The British commanders on the other hand correctly appreciated the Japanese intentions and laid a trap for them. The trap was roughly in the shape of a box. "One side of the box was two battalions on the ridge itself; the other was two more along



41. The Tunnels Area.

the Mayu River. The bottom of the box, its northern end, was yet again two battalions holding the hills south of Maungdaw-Buthidaung road. The lid was a mobile striking force of a brigade less a battalion, placed behind the river side of the box, ready to swing in". The Japanese strike force was to be "shepherded" into the box, and when well inside, the lid would swing shut, trapping the enemy.[30]

The 'lid' of the box was 71st Brigade with A and B Companies of 2/8th Punjab deployed at Sinoh East and Sinoh West, covering the Kin Chaung and Ale Chaung valleys. "Sinoh East is two miles from Sinoh West, and the total width of the box was 3 miles of jungle clad country".[31] The two unsupported companies were to prevent the Japanese force from passing through the three miles wide gap. It was a tall order even under favourable conditions, but under the present circumstances, it was nothing short of wishful thinking.

On 2 May, the Japanese struck, attacking both sides of the box simultaneously. The first halves of both the sides soon crumbled. Moving north, they began "infiltrating round and through" the two companies of 2/8th Punjab, and by next day, had captured Point 551. That night, an attack to dislodge the Japanese was repulsed, and on 4 May, the enemy cut Buthidaung road at milestone 4. It was an absolute disaster. On 8 May, the British abandoned Buthidaung, withdrawing towards the west of the range to defend Maungdaw. But then, fearing a wide flanking move from the east, they also evacuated Maungdaw and withdrew towards the line Nhila-Bawli Bazar-Goppe Bazar-Taung Bazar. The Japanese, having achieved all their objectives, did not follow up.[32]

On 13 May, 8/8th Punjab took up defensive positions around Goppe Bazar. During the monsoon season, the battalion remained deployed on the frontline with short periods of rest. Operations were confined to patrolling and encounters with the enemy were few. In August, the battalion was withdrawn from the

Arakan Front and moved to Comilla for rest and training. During its stay in the Arakan, 8/8th Punjab suffered 124 casualties including 52 killed. After spending the next sixteen months at Chittagong and Barrackpore, the battalion was posted to 150th Brigade at Bethmangala in Mysore in December 1944. By then, the battalion's Sikhs had been replaced by Gujars.[33]

The disastrous Arakan Campaign shattered the already low morale of British and Indian troops. For the two old Burma Battalions of 8th Punjab Regiment, it was a particularly traumatic experience. One was decimated by heavy casualties, while the other was rebuked by a person no less than Field Marshal Slim himself. The burden of failure lay heavy upon them. They had arrived in their old hunting grounds, only to become hunted themselves. The 5th Battalion in particular had suffered grievous losses to add to the hundred or so casualties it had sustained on the Northwest Frontier in 1941.

The 2nd Battalion suffered trauma of a different kind. Field Marshal Slim, commenting in his memoirs about its role in the failure to trap the Japanese on 2 May wrote, "I got very angry with one or two units that had not behaved well, and said some hard things to them, but thinking it over I was not sure the blame was all theirs".[34] The exoneration had come thirteen years too late. As Captain Cliff Hawes drily noted, "A handsome, if belated, recognition but at the time we were scarred with the condemnation". At the end of the campaign, "an effort to humiliate the battalion by putting it to work as a pioneer unit was successfully resisted and it went into quarters at Daulat Ganj".[35] But it was only the beginning of the woes of 2/8th Punjab.

The battalion moved to Jhinkergacherghat under "a bit of a black". A dozen or so men were court-martialled. Captain Hawes, a member of the court martial protested at what he considered to be instances of "palpable injustices". But to no avail; several men of A and B Companies were sentenced to hard labour and

dishonourable discharge. The battalion moved to Ranchi in November and trained hard for jungle warfare—determined to redeem its honour. But to their bitter disappointment, at the end of their training in April 1944, instead of going to the front, they were posted to NWFP. Apparently, the battalion's punishment was not over. It was particularly galling for this proud old battalion, which had fought in every British campaign in Burma during the previous century. The battalion "quickly gained the reputation of being restless and uncongenial". Finally, in October, the battalion got the call it had been waiting for. It was posted to 26th Indian Brigade, then training in the jungles of Western Ghats in southern India. The brigade was earmarked to join 36th British Division, which was operating in North Burma.[36] General Slim's plan for the reconquest of Burma was already in motion, and 2/8th Punjabis were impatient to join in. They had a point to prove.

The Reconquest of Burma 1945

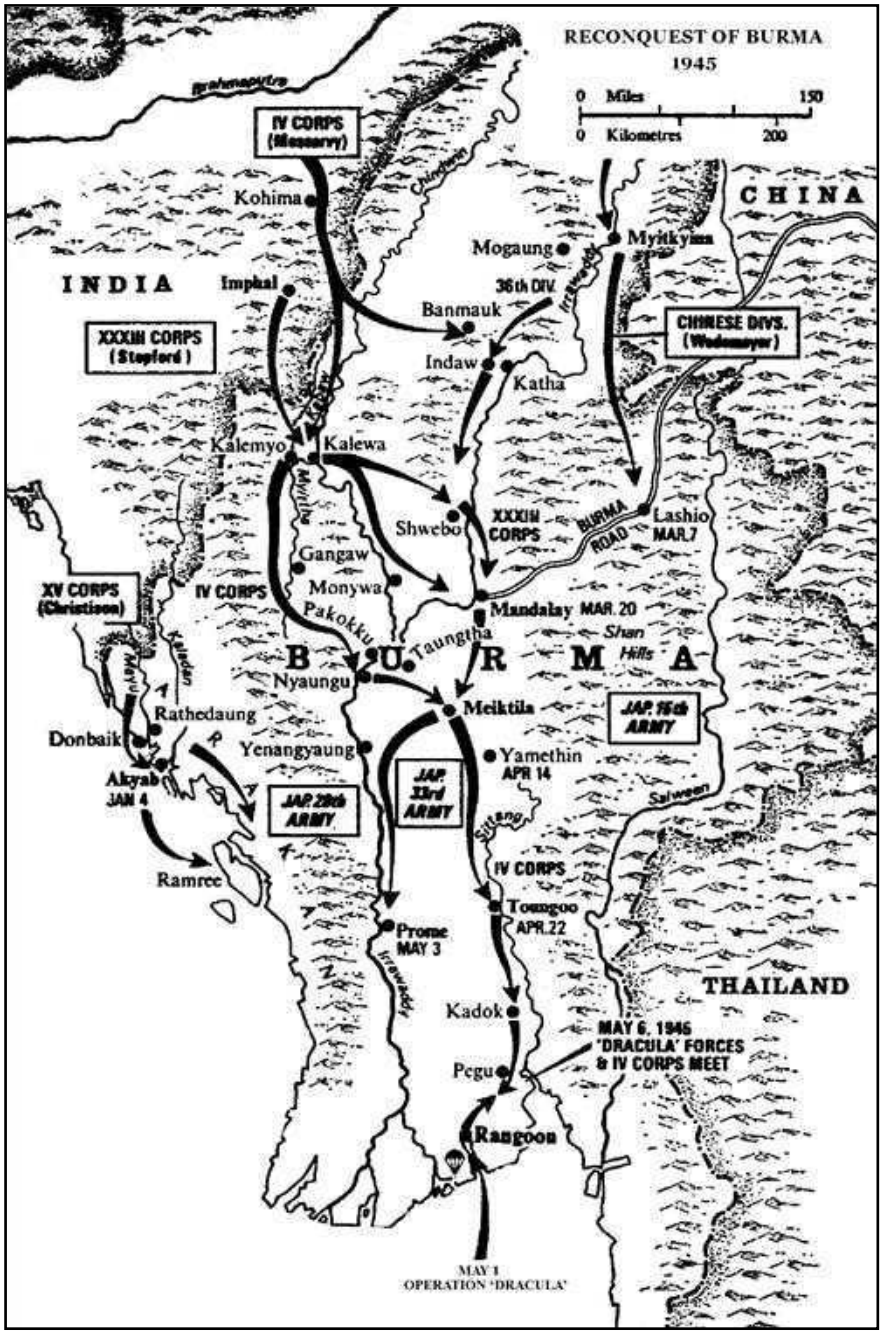
After the debacle of the First Arakan Campaign, the British set about to reorganize themselves and prepare for another offensive after the monsoons. Morale of the troops was very low, and their health had suffered greatly, mostly due to malaria. Serious efforts were made to address these problems and to improve logistics. A special force called the 'Chindits' was created to operate deep inside enemy territory and disrupt his lines of communication. The Chindits cost a lot, suffered a great deal, and in military terms, achieved nothing. But handled skilfully by the Allied propaganda machinery, their activities were a great morale booster.[37]

Training in jungle warfare was carried out in earnest, and all frontline battalions were encouraged to launch small patrols into the jungle, called Tiger Patrols. Their task was to strike at soft targets without getting unduly involved. The aim was to convince

the troops that the Japanese were not supermen and could be taken by surprise as easily as British and Indian soldiers. Soon, the message started sinking in; the men started regaining their confidence and became more comfortable in the jungle. Meanwhile, strict measures to control malaria and other diseases were bearing fruit, and hospital admission rates started falling. The problem of supplies was largely tackled by air and made a huge impact on the outcome of the campaign.[38] The British also changed their approach to war. Instead of retreating in the face of Japanese tactics of infiltration and encirclement, they decided to stand firm and create strongholds into which the troops could move in. The strongholds would then be maintained by air supply while reserves were brought up to crush the attacking Japanese between them and the strongholds.[39]

In October 1943, General Slim took over command of the Eastern Army, now designated as Fourteenth Army. The British were ready to try their new tactics of jungle warfare, and in November, a second offensive was launched in the Arakan. After some anxious moments initially, the offensive succeeded in routing the Japanese. The success had a tremendous effect on the morale of the troops. At the same time, IV Corps advanced towards the River Chindwin in order to clear the Japanese from northern Burma and to open the road to China. But the Japanese, greatly alarmed by the Allied preparations, had decided "to forestall and dislocate the British offensive" by launching a pre-emptive strike into southern Assam.

The Japanese launched their offensive in the middle of March 1944, with the objective of seizing the Imphal Plain and the mountain passes of Assam, thus disrupting the Allied offensive in North Burma. Their line of communication was dangerously overstretched, but they hoped to get their supplies from the captured British stores at Imphal. In the bitter fighting that followed, the Japanese came uncomfortably close to attaining their

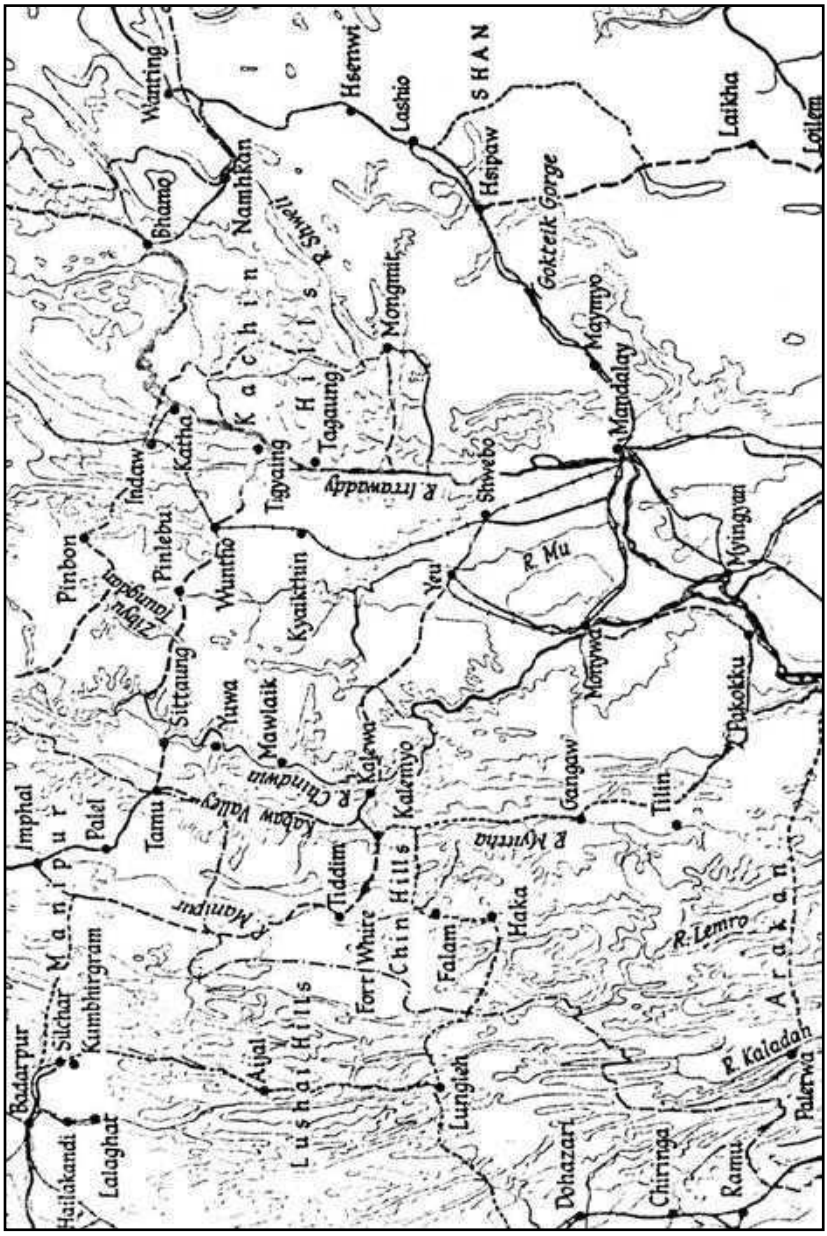


42. Reconquest of Burma 1945.

objectives. They besieged the small British garrison at Kohima and cut the Imphal-Kohima Road. On 29 March, the 161st Indian Brigade under Brigadier DFW Warren (6/8th Punjab)[40] was flown in from Arakan, and on 18 April, the siege of Kohima was lifted. By 22 June, the Japanese had been hurled back across the Chindwin after suffering more than 50,000 casualties. The Japanese had taken a huge gamble—and lost.

At the end of the monsoon season in October 1944, the Allies put into motion their plans for the reconquest of Burma. They had complete air superiority, and the Fourteenth Army was brimming with confidence. The offensive was opened by XXXIII Corps on the central front. The corps was to establish a bridgehead over the Chindwin at Kalewa and then push towards Monywa and Mandalay. It would be followed by IV Corps, which would sweep eastwards and destroy the Japanese forces in the Shwebo Plain. At the same time, the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) forces would advance from north towards Indaw and Lashio. The NCAC was a curious arrangement whereby several Chinese divisions under American command had been operating in North Burma. In the autumn of 1944, they were joined by 36th British Division. Meanwhile in the south, XV Corps was tasked with clearance of the Arakan. A subsidiary airborne and amphibious operation codenamed 'Dracula' was planned to take Rangoon from the south.

By mid-December, the Chinese were advancing towards Lashio to secure the Burma Road, while 36th British Division had reached Katha on the Irrawaddy and was in contact with IV Corps. On the central front, XXXIII Corps was approaching the Irrawaddy and XV Corps was moving into the Arakan. As the Allies advanced from north and east, the Japanese withdrew behind the Irrawaddy and started concentrating their forces at Mandalay, where they hoped to defeat the Fourteenth Army. Having failed to draw the enemy into battle in the Shwebo Plain, General Slim



43. Northern Burma.

decided to defeat him at Mandalay. While XXXIII Corps attacked Mandalay from the north, IV Corps moved stealthily along the Myittha River Valley in a great flanking move towards Meiktila, in the rear of the Japanese at Mandalay. The stage was now set for the destruction of Japanese forces in Central Burma.

After intensive jungle training near Bangalore, 2/8th Punjab under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Brian Roe moved to Ledo in northern Assam in December 1944. The other battalions in 26th Indian Brigade were 1/19th Hyderabad and 2nd East Kent. From Ledo, the brigade was flown to an old Chindit airstrip north of the Naba-Katha-Indaw triangle on the Irrawaddy to join the 36th British Division. On 1 January 1945, 2/8th Punjab reached Katha, and crossing the Irrawaddy, advanced towards Nanponpon Chaung. Contact was soon established with the Japanese and several skirmishes took place. During one of these, Major CIM Watson, the C Company Commander was killed, while gallantly leading a charge against a Japanese bunker near Lawa. In this action, Subedar Chhotu Ram was awarded the Military Cross. The company was taken over by Major Wisal Mohammed Khan, who a few days later, wiped out a platoon-strength Japanese patrol.[41]

The 36th British Division split into two columns. The 29th British Brigade advanced south along the Irrawaddy towards Thabeikkyin, while 72nd British and 26th Indian Brigades turned east towards the River Shweli. The division was given the task of capturing Myitson, Mongmit and Mogok, with Kyaukme as its final objective. The 26th and 72nd Brigades were to capture Myitson on the Shweli and then drive towards Mongmit in a converging attack with 29th Brigade approaching from Thabeikkyin. Opposing them was the 18th Japanese Division, whose mission was to prevent any British advance towards Mandalay from the north.[42]

The Battle of Myitson: The village of Myitson lay in the angle between the River Shweli, where it turns north, and the Nammeik Chaung, which joins it from the south. The river was 400 yards

wide, fast flowing and unfordable. The surrounding country was covered by thick jungle. South of Myitson, the main road continued towards Mongmit. On 1 February 1945, the 36th British Division, approaching from northwest, tried to establish a bridgehead over the Shweli by way of an island about one mile east of Myitson. The assault was led by the 2nd East Kent (The Buffs), but the bridgehead had to be abandoned after the Buffs suffered heavy casualties due to Japanese fire.[43] The Buffs were withdrawn, and their place was taken over by 2/8th Punjab. Over the next five days, the battalion suffered several casualties due to enemy shelling including the newly arrived Second-in-Command, Major HUK Babar, who was seriously wounded in the head by mortar fire.[44]

On 6 February, a new plan to capture Myitson was adopted on the suggestion of 2/8th Punjab. It was decided to cross the Shweli some six miles north of Myitson, and then attack the village from the west, after crossing the 200 yards wide and chest-deep Nammeik Chaung. The surprise attack was to be carried out by 2/8th Punjab and 1/19th Hyderabad. The 72nd Brigade would keep the enemy's attention focused on the island, where the original crossing had taken place earlier, while one of its battalions was to protect the exposed flank of the attacking force.[45]

On the night of 8/9 February, 1/19th Hyderabad crossed the Nammeik Chaung undetected but then suffered heavy losses from intense enemy fire from the village. Next day, it was followed by 2/8th Punjab and by the evening of 10 February, the two battalions had successfully established a bridgehead after heavy fighting. However, in the process, both battalions suffered serious casualties. The 2nd East Kent now crossed over and started expanding the bridgehead southwards, while 2/8th Punjab moved towards the Thé Chaung on the southern bank of the Shweli to complete the perimeter around Myitson. The battalion was dispersed over a large area and Japanese infiltrators succeeded in

cutting off A and D Companies from the rest of the battalion. On 15 February, the Battalion and Brigade Headquarters crossed the Shweli by using a ferry opposite Myitson.[46]

On 17 February, the Japanese counterattacked. "Shortly after dawn, under cover of intensive artillery barrage, two Japanese battalions attacked the bridgehead perimeter, the main weight of the assault falling on the east flank held by the Punjabis. The fighting that went on all day was incredibly bitter, the Japs employing their familiar tactics of suicidal rushes, and using for the first time in Burma theatre, flame throwers. But the Punjabis fought with matchless gallantry and by killing more than 350 Japs virtually wiped out two enemy battalions. The bridgehead was saved and the total enemy casualties were well in excess of 600".[47] The casualties of 2/8th Punjab were 125.[48]

The appearance of flame throwers was a particularly nasty shock, but the battalion stood firm. Brunt of the attack fell on A and C Companies commanded by Majors Nazar Hussain and Wisal Mohammad Khan. A Company, which earlier had been ordered to stand down, was caught off balance. For the first two hours, the situation in the company was extremely critical and it suffered heavy casualties. But Major Nazar Hussain was able to stabilize the situation and kept the enemy at bay. He was awarded the Military Cross for his cool handling of the company.[49]

Heavy fighting also took place in front of C Company, where Major Wisal took a bullet in the helmet. Luckily for him, he got away with nothing worse than a new hair parting. One of his NCOs, Naik Kikar Singh got out of his foxhole to get a better view of the enemy, and standing with his back to a tree, mowed down the attacking Japanese from a range of ten yards. He kept firing at the enemy, killing a large number of them, receiving freshly loaded weapons from his comrades in the foxhole. Although he remained unscathed, the tree behind him was pockmarked with enemy bullet holes. Naik Kikar Singh was recommended for the Victoria Cross,

but the recommendation was turned down because Lieutenant General FW Festing, the Division Commander, did not approve of VCs for defensive actions! Instead, the gallant NCO was awarded the IDSM.[50]

The battalion had behaved magnificently and received a number of gallantry awards. Colonel Roe was awarded the DSO and Major Wisal the MC. In all, eight MCs, one IDSM and four MMs were awarded besides ten Mentions in Despatches. Next day, General Festing, who was not fond of Indian troops, addressed the battalion and apologised for harbouring suspicions against troops that had behaved with "so much distinction". He described the action as "the most bitter fight I have seen in the whole of my career". The Subedar Major declared, *"Abhi humara nam thik hogaya"*.[51] The battalion had regained its reputation with a vengeance; and banished the ghosts of Arakan forever.

Capture of Mongmit: On 18 February, the 18th Japanese Division began withdrawing south, leaving one regiment to defend Mongmit. On 25 February, the 36th Division resumed its advance towards Mongmit, with 26th Brigade advancing along the main road from Myitson, while 72nd Brigade moved along the Nammeik Chaung to join 29th Brigade approaching from Thabeikkyin. In the meantime, the Japanese had infiltrated back into the hills astride the Myitson road and started harassing the 2nd East Kent, which was in the lead. On 7 March, a serious engagement took place in a mountain defile near Point 1633, and the Buffs were held up for a day.[52] The Brigade Commander asked 2/8th Punjab to take over the lead, and Major Wisal with C Company quickly ambushed and destroyed the Japanese force. He then rapidly covered the distance of fifteen miles to Mongmit and took up position near the town on the night of 9 March. Early next morning, his company captured Mongmit, much to the annoyance of 1/1st Gurkha Rifles, who were leading the advance of 72nd Brigade.[53]

The 36th Division took Mogok on 19 March. From there, it moved across the Goktaik Gorge to Kyaukme, where it linked up with the Sino-American forces on 30 March. *En route,* several encounters took place with Japanese rearguards. On 12 March, the 2nd East Kent was leading the advance of the brigade, when it was again held up after coming under fire by Japanese troops occupying a feature about two and a half miles ahead of them. Major Wisal Mohammed Khan volunteered to neutralize the threat. He led his company against the enemy position in a wide flanking move into the jungle. The Japanese, fearing an encirclement, started withdrawing but were intercepted and then systematically wiped out.[54]

From Kyaukme, 2/8th Punjab proceeded to Maymyo, where it halted for a week's rest in early April. Meanwhile on the central front, IV Corps had captured Meiktila on 3 March, while XXXIII Corps advancing on both sides of the Irrawaddy, took Mandalay on 19 March, after heavy fighting. The route to Rangoon now lay open. The Japanese Army had been decisively beaten, and Slim's primary aim now was to destroy the Japanese forces before they could escape eastwards into the Shan Hills. The impending arrival of monsoons was an added source of urgency. On 7 April, it was decided to exchange the Indian battalions of 36th British Division with British battalions of 20th Indian Division. Consequently on 12 April, 2/8th Punjab joined 100th Indian Brigade of 20th Division near Mount Popa.[55]

IV Corps drove down the main road from Meiktila to Rangoon, cutting off Japanese forces between the Irrawaddy and the Sittang from the Shan Hills towards the east. In the meantime, XXXIII Corps (7th and 20th Indian Divisions) advanced south along the Irrawaddy towards Prome, in order to destroy the Japanese forces falling back from the central front and to cut off those retreating from the Arakan. The strategic aim was "to split the Japanese forces in Burma into three by a relentless

two-pronged drive southwards and then complete their destruction". The 20th Indian Division was to spearhead the drive of XXXIII Corps down the Irrawaddy Valley. After breaking out from its bridgehead on the Irrawaddy in March, the division had quickly captured Kyaukse, effectively ending Japanese resistance between Mandalay and Meiktila. In early April, it was ordered to advance southwards and strike the Japanese rear at Magwe and Allanmyo. From Magwe, the division was to continue its advance to Prome and Rangoon. It was closely followed by the 7th Division, operating on both sides of the Irrawaddy.

As the 20th Division began its chase, it was joined by 2/8th Punjab. The battalion fought several small actions at Natmauk on 19 April. Next day, it surrounded a large number of Japanese at Taungdwingyi, inflicting heavy losses on them against light casualties of its own.[56] On 19 April, Magwe was captured, and on 29 April, 100th Brigade took Allanmyo. The advance was then continued towards Prome, which was taken on 2 May. All Japanese forces west of the Irrawaddy were now cut off. The speed of the advance had shocked the Japanese, and large number of their troops were encircled and destroyed. Many were captured, including elements of the INA. In the meantime, Operation Dracula had been executed, and sea and airborne landings took place near Rangoon, which was evacuated by the Japanese. The operations in Burma were fast approaching a conclusion.

Battle of the Kama Bridgehead: By early May, the main body of the Japanese troops from the Arakan had arrived west of the Irrawaddy. XXXIII Corps was ordered to establish a cordon on the eastern bank of the river and prevent these men from crossing over and joining their comrades on the other side. While the 20th Indian Division drove southwards, mopping up remnants of the Japanese forces and clearing the road from Prome to Rangoon, the 7th Indian Division advanced on both sides of the Irrawaddy to destroy all remaining enemy forces.

The Japanese attempted to cross the Irrawaddy mainly at two places: at Kama-Zalon, north of Prome; and at Shwedaung, south of Prome. The 80th Brigade of 20th Indian Division was operating in the area between Kama and Zalon, with 2/8th Punjab now under its command. By 2 May, the battalion had reached the area opposite Kama. It was supported by a mountain battery, some medium guns and a section of anti-tank guns. The whole force was designated as 'Rocol', which was tasked with blocking the Japanese escape routes in the areas of Zalon and Myinzu.[57]

Over the next few days, 2/8th Punjab was involved in several encounters with groups of desperate Japanese trying to escape. On 6 May, a platoon of D Company crossed the Irrawaddy in dugout canoes to lay a night ambush on the west bank. They sank seven boats full of Japanese soldiers trying to cross the river. In this action, Subedar Musahib Khan was awarded a posthumous Military Cross, while two men received the Military Medal.[58] In another action, a patrol of A Company crossed the river and captured eight INA soldiers,[59] while on the main Allanmyo-Prome road, B Company under Captain DJ Parsons ambushed and killed over sixty Japanese in one day.[60]

On 9 May, at Kyawza north of Zalon, a platoon of C Company was surrounded by a force of about 100 Japanese, who pinned them down for almost twelve hours with mortar fire. A Company under Major Nazar Hussain was despatched to extricate the platoon and after some fighting, the Japanese withdrew to the west bank.[61] This action was the first indication that Zalon had been chosen by the Japanese to establish their bridgehead on the east bank of the Irrawaddy. There was constant movement of the enemy in the area during the next few days and by 13 May, they had succeeded in establishing a bridgehead. The battalion remained in close contact with the enemy and there were frequent skirmishes. On 21 May, the 20th Division resumed its

advance towards Rangoon, leaving behind 2/8th Punjab under the command of 33rd Brigade of 7th Indian Division.[62]

While three brigades advanced against Japanese forces on the west bank from north and northwest, the 33rd Brigade formed a double cordon around the Kama Bridgehead east of the river. 2/8th Punjab was part of the outer cordon at Wettigan and Tititut. Between 21 and 30 May, the Japanese made repeated attempts to breakout of the bridgehead but were repulsed with heavy losses. Some managed to get through and escaped eastwards towards the mountains of Pegu Yomas. Others, however, were intercepted and annihilated. Early on 28 May, a party of some 300 broke through the cordon and attempted to get away but was intercepted by 2/8th Punjab, who killed nearly eighty of them.[63] By 30 May, the Japanese forces west of the Irrawaddy had been destroyed or dispersed and no longer posed a military threat. On 31 May, 2/8th Punjab left to rejoin 20th Division and was billeted at Minhla. Mopping up operations continued during the monsoon season. In August, the Japanese finally surrendered and in September, 2/8th Punjab left Burma for French Indochina to disarm Japanese troops.

Southeast Asia 1945-46

For many British troops, the end of war in August 1945, did not bring much of a respite, as they were employed in restoring colonial rule of Britain and her allies in countries liberated from the Japanese. While some of these missions were peaceful, others turned ugly. Four 8th Punjabi battalions were engaged in operations in different parts of Southeast Asia from 1945 to 1946.

French Indochina: In July 1945, the Allies formed an Allied Control Commission for French Indochina (Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia). The commission, assisted by a military force designated as Allied Land Forces French Indochina (ALFFIC) was

tasked with enforcing Japanese surrender, keeping law and order around Saigon, and providing humanitarian assistance to liberated Allied POWs. Major General Douglas Gracey was appointed to head the commission, and his 20th Indian Division was designated as ALFFIC. By the time the division started arriving in Saigon in mid-September, the law-and-order situation had significantly deteriorated, and the Vietnamese communists (Viet Minh) were scrambling to seize power. Soon, British forces were in open conflict with the Viet Minh, and the British had to employ Japanese soldiers to assist them.

2/8th Punjab arrived in French Indochina by sea on 17 October 1945. By now, clashes with the Viet Minh had become common. Although British forces including 2/8th Punjab suffered some losses, most of the casualties were Vietnamese. As the French started taking control of their colony, the commission was dissolved and 20th Division was withdrawn. The last British troops to leave Saigon were 2/8th Punjabis, who left in March 1946, arriving in Bengal on 14 April. At the time of independence, they were stationed at Comilla.[64]

Operation Zipper: At the end of the Burmese Campaign, the British planned an amphibious invasion of Malaya codenamed 'Zipper'. The invasion was to be spearheaded by 23rd and 25th Indian Divisions followed by 5th and 26th Indian Divisions. Planned for September 1945, the Japanese surrender in August turned the invasion into an exercise. The invasion force was employed to reoccupy Malaya, maintain law and order and disarm Japanese forces. Two 8th Punjabi battalions took part in the operation as part of 23rd Indian Division. 5/8th and 6/8th Punjab had joined the division in February at Nasik, the former as the divisional Reconnaissance Battalion and the latter as its Machine Gun Battalion. In September, both battalions moved to the Dutch East Indies with 23rd Division to take control of the former Dutch colony.[65]

Dutch East Indies: The Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) was another European colony where the British were asked to send their forces to stabilize the situation in the wake of Japanese surrender. Their mission was to disarm the Japanese, succour the Allied POWs and keep law and order until the arrival of Dutch forces. However, the Indonesians were in no mood to let their former colonial masters back in. On 17 August, they declared independence, and by the time British forces started arriving in September 1945, the Indonesians had established a functioning government. It was a delicate situation, and the British were not keen to get involved in another war; that too to preserve someone else's empire. But they did not help themselves by giving conflicting statements and allowing the Dutch forces to move in. The already suspicious Indonesians reacted by starting a vicious guerrilla campaign.

The British expeditionary force consisted of XV Corps, with three Indian infantry divisions and elements of air force and navy under the designation of Allied Forces Netherlands East Indies (AFNEI). The first to arrive was the 23rd Division, which started landing in Java, the eye of the storm, in September. With it came the 5th and 6th Battalions of 8th Punjab Regiment. It was followed by the 5th Division, while the 26th Division was sent to Sumatra. 8/8th Punjab joined 26th Indian Division in November. The British strategy was to hold selected key positions and to use force mostly in self-defence. The Indonesian tactics on the other hand, were to attack European civilians and isolated garrisons, and to ambush patrols and convoys. Over the next twelve months, the British fought an ugly guerrilla war, which cost them more than 2300 casualties.[66]

6/8th Punjab arrived in Java in October, and its companies were deployed in Batavia, guarding the Divisional Headquarters, the docks and camps of liberated Allied POWs and internees (RAPWI). Later in December, the battalion concentrated at the docks. In May 1946, it moved to Buitenzorg in western Java,

44. The Dutch East Indies.

where it remained engaged in patrolling and minor counter-insurgency operations. It arrived back in Malaya in November and returned to India in January 1947. The battalion's casualties in Java were two VCOs and two ORs killed, and one officer and two ORs wounded.[67]

5/8th Punjab sailed for Java on 15 October, and its companies were dispersed all over the island. The battalion was considerably hampered in its efforts to disarm the Japanese due to frequent attacks by the Indonesians. In December, the battalion concentrated at Buitenzorg under the 36th Indian Brigade. It was a period of increasing violence, and on 15 December, the battalion had to open fire on a violent mob, which was attacking a RAPWI camp, killing sixty of them.[68]

Two days later, a patrol of D Company was ambushed by insurgents concealed in a rubber plantation outside Buitenzorg. The tanks accompanying the patrol opened fire on the insurgents, and some were seen falling. A platoon under Company Havildar Major Mohammad Akbar then carried out a flanking attack on the position. But as the platoon neared the position, it was surrounded by armed insurgents eight times their number. A desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued in which CHM Akbar killed at least ten insurgents. Despite being wounded four times, he continued to fight with great valour. Seeing Lance Naik Jalal Shah surrounded by eight men, the gallant NCO rushed to his aid and saved him from certain death. However, in the process, he himself was killed by a sword thrust. The platoon was able to extricate itself, having killed ninety-eight insurgents. Their own casualties were one killed and three wounded. For his act of gallantry, CHM Akbar was awarded the IOM.[69]

The next two months saw frequent skirmishes with the Indonesians until March 1946, when the situation eased considerably. In late October, the battalion left Java for India and was garrisoned at Pulgaon in Central India. In July 1947, the

battalion moved to the Northwest Frontier and was stationed at Wana at the time of independence.[70]

8/8th Punjab left Madras for Sumatra in October 1945. It arrived at Medan on 4 November and joined 71st Brigade of 26th Division. In December, the battalion left for Padang. On the night of 15/16 March 1946, a platoon of B Company guarding the ordnance depot was attacked by insurgents armed with rifles and grenades, and one sepoy was killed. The platoon was reinforced, and a patrol was sent out under Jemadar Phul Singh. The patrol killed one insurgent and captured a number of others along with their weapons. After this, clashes with the Indonesians became frequent until October, when a truce was declared. In November, control of Sumatra was handed over to the Dutch, and the British forces withdrew. The battalion moved to Lahore, from where it proceeded to Kohat in April 1947.[71] During the operations in Sumatra, Jemadar Phul Singh and Subedar Sher Bahadur were awarded the Military Cross.

The return of troops from Southeast Asia finally brought to an end all operations connected with the Second World War. During the war, 8th Punjab Regiment fought in three major campaigns and suffered almost 4500 casualties including 1350 officers and men killed. The Regiment faced the challenges of war with its customary zeal and courage. The award of three Campaign and fifteen Battle Honours besides numerous gallantry awards are a testament to its splendid performance. But now, it was faced with challenges of a different kind. Independence for Pakistanis would be a bittersweet experience; the joy of freedom mixed with the sorrow and trauma of the terrible events that accompanied it; and the challenge of establishing a new state against overwhelming odds.

13
A New Beginning

On 14 August 1947, the Muslims of India gained their independence; both from the servitude of their British rulers as well as the tyranny of their Hindu neighbours. It was a new beginning in more than one sense. The birth of Pakistan swept aside all ambiguities of the past. The sepoy would no longer fight for a "distant King-Emperor, whose face he had seen only on a coin". From now on, he would serve only to defend his homeland and to preserve the freedom of his people. It also marked the beginning of the end for many of the old regiments of the British Indian Army. In 1956, the eleven infantry regiments of Pakistan Army were amalgamated into four regiments, necessitating yet another renumbering and renaming of battalions. The reorganization spelt the end for 8th Punjab Regiment, but it also gave its battalions a new beginning as members of the fabled Baluch Regiment.

In the new geo-political environment following the Second World War, colonial empires had become anachronistic. The people of India were determined to gain their freedom, and an exhausted Britain could no longer deny it to them. In 1946, when independence and partition of India became inevitable, the British Government replaced the sensible but unglamorous viceroy Field Marshal Wavell with Lord Mountbatten, the royal fop. Chosen more for his royal connections than his abilities, Mountbatten was sent to provide an imperial touch to the last days of the British 'Raj'. But instead of sticking to the brief assigned to him, he and his wife became embroiled in partisan politics and personality clashes, winning for themselves the lasting opprobrium of the Pakistani people. The shameful mismanagement of the entire process and the "indecent haste" in which the British left India

resulted in one of the greatest tragedies of all times. A million people were brutally massacred, millions more were left homeless and unspeakable atrocities were committed on all sides. As a parting gift, the British left the status of Jammu and Kashmir unresolved. The ensuing conflict has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and brought the world to the brink of a nuclear showdown.

At the time of independence, 3/8th and 6/8th Punjab were stationed in India, while the rest of the battalions were in Pakistan. The immediate task for the Regiment was to move these two battalions from India to Pakistan. Both battalions proceeded to NWFP, leaving behind their Sikhs and Gujars. The journey back was a harrowing experience for the officers and men, as they encountered the gory scenes of massacres of Muslims in East Punjab. But the men remained disciplined and no untoward incident occurred. The 3rd Battalion moved to Peshawar, while the 6th Battalion went to Abbottabad. All over the sub-continent, people were on the move; Muslims to Pakistan; Sikhs and Hindus to India, and all 8th Punjabi battalions were employed in providing protection to non-Muslim evacuees. 5/8th Punjab was specially commended for its good work by the Commander-in-Chief Pakistan Army.

By October 1947, the Sikhs and Gujars of 8th Punjab Regiment had departed for India. It was a poignant moment for the 8th Punjabis to see their comrades go; men with whom they had fought and shared the hardships of war. The parting was felt deeply on both sides and took place in an atmosphere of friendship and goodwill. Little did the men know that from now onwards, they could only meet as enemies on the battlefield. Most of the British officers of 8th Punjab Regiment also left for home. However, there was an acute shortage of officers in Pakistan Army, and some British officers were asked to stay on. By the end of the year, all

battalions except 2/8th Punjab were under the command of Pakistani officers.

Departure of the non-Muslims left all the battalions two companies short. The void was filled by Muslim soldiers from regiments that had been allotted to India. Hindustani Muslims from the Jat Regiment and Indian Grenadiers were posted to the Regimental Centre. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions received Hindustani Muslims from the Jat Regiment while 4th Battalion received Hindustani Muslims from the Grenadiers. The 2nd Battalion exchanged its Gujars with Ranghars (Muslim Rajputs from East Punjab and Rajputana) from the Rajput Regiment. The Regimental Centre had its hands full, settling refugee soldiers and their families as well as sorting out records. But it acquitted itself commendably. The refugee soldiers were settled in lands allocated in Sindh and Punjab, with a model village, Chak No. 16 ML, being constructed exclusively for the families of the new 8th Punjabis. The refugee soldiers were imbued with the spirit of sacrifice, having left everything behind. They came from illustrious regiments with longstanding martial traditions and were determined to do their best. Their integration in the Regiment took place smoothly.[1]

Soon after independence, the Government of Pakistan decided to withdraw the Army from the tribal areas. The senior British commanders were against the pull out, but the Government rightly felt that after independence, the rationale for maintaining such a large number of troops in the tribal areas no longer existed. Consequently, Operation Curzon was launched in December 1947, and all Army troops including the 8th Punjabis were withdrawn without any untoward incident, leaving the bemused tribesmen to their own devices.

The first few months were very difficult for the young nation. There was an acute shortage of everything and not many people gave Pakistan any chance of survival. But survive she did;

thanks to the determination of her people and the inspiring leadership of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The situation in the Army was no better. It had the manpower, but most of the stores and military installations were in India. Getting the Army in operational readiness was a Herculean task. It was at this moment of crisis that the new nation was faced with war. The Hindu Raja of the Muslim State of Jammu and Kashmir was prevaricating about accession to India or Pakistan. In the meantime, the Kashmiris rose up in revolt against his tyranny and were soon joined by tribesmen from the Frontier. India responded by airlifting regular troops to Kashmir. This forced Pakistan Army to move in, and fighting continued throughout 1948. By 1 January 1949, when a ceasefire came into force, the Indians were in control of two-thirds of the state.

Three 8th Punjabi battalions were employed in Kashmir during 1948, although none took part in any major fighting. In September 1948, 4/8th Punjab moved to Pir Kanthi in Bagh Sector, where it was deployed in a defensive role. The battalion carried out intensive patrolling and was involved in several minor encounters with the enemy. In one such encounter, a platoon of Sikhs was ambushed by a battalion patrol, while in another incident, an Indian aircraft was shot down by machine gun fire. In November, the battalion moved to Kotli Sector, where it remained till September 1949. The battalion was awarded 38 Commendation Certificates for its good work during the war.[2] Two other battalions, 5/8th and 8/8th Punjab, moved to Tithwal Sector in November, as part of 104 Brigade and were deployed at Pir Sahaba and Kafir Khan Range.[3]

The Regiment re-raised two battalions in response to the war in Kashmir. 6/8th Punjab, which had been disbanded on 31 January 1948, was re-raised at Lahore on 1 October, by Lieutenant Colonel KM Nazir Khan,[4] while 9/8th Punjab was re-raised on 30 October, by Captain Aboobaker Osman Mitha, also at

Lahore. The composition of the battalion was Hindustani and Punjabi Muslims in no fixed ratio.[5] Captain AO Mitha, who had been transferred from the Indian Grenadiers at the time of independence, later rose to prominence, when he raised and commanded Pakistan Army's elite Special Service Group (SSG) in 1955. He retired as a Major General in 1971, after a most distinguished military career.

As the moment of crisis passed, the Army settled down to the task of rebuilding and reorganizing. An Army Planning Board was formed in 1953, to "evolve operational concepts and plans, review regulations and procedures, and suggest structural and institutional changes".[6] The Army was reorganized into five infantry divisions and an armoured brigade. The Mutual Assistance Agreement signed with the United States of America in 1954, brought in much needed military hardware. The same year, a major military exercise called 'November Handicap' was successfully carried out. Three 8th Punjabi battalions, 1/8th, 3/8th and 8/8th Punjab, took part in the exercise. By the middle of the decade, the Army felt reasonably secure in its role as the defender of the nation.

The situation on the border remained tense, and all 8th Punjabi battalions did their share of duty in border defence. They were also called upon to aid the civil authorities from time to time. 3/8th Punjab was called out to suppress a mutiny by the police in Dacca on 14 July 1948, while 9/8th Punjab was engaged in an operation against renegade tribesmen near Palandri in Azad Kashmir in 1950.[7] Meanwhile, 1/8th Punjab took part in Operation Walrus in 1952, to quell an insurrection by some Afridi and Orakzai tribesmen on the instigation of the Afghan Government. The tribesmen however, dispersed without any fighting.[8]

8th Punjab Regiment maintained its excellence in sports after independence. Lance Havildar Mirza of 1/8th Punjab set a new Pakistan record in 400 meters race in the 1950 Pakistan

Olympics,[9] while the 4th Battalion produced a number of athletes who competed at the Army and national levels. Prominent among them were Lieutenant Colonel Nazar Mohammad, who was a member of Pakistan athletics team to the 1948 London Olympics, and Havildar Muhammad Iqbal, who was declared the Best Athlete of Pakistan in 1949, after winning four gold medals. Havildar Sabir Hussain of 5/8th Punjab created a new national record in high jump in the same competition, while seven players of the Regiment played in the Army Hockey Team.[10]

In 1955, the Army Planning Board recommended the amalgamation of the eleven infantry regiments of Pakistan Army into four regiments on the basis of "similar traditions and territorial affiliation".[11] The decision was based mostly on economic grounds. However, the later expansion of some of the regiments into more than fifty battalions was never envisaged. The 8th Punjab Regiment was grouped with Baluch and Bahawalpur Regiments. The criteria of similar traditions and territorial affiliations, however, did not apply to this grouping. These three regiments with completely different backgrounds, experiences and traditions seem to have been lumped together out of expediency. Naturally, no one was pleased, but it was a bitter pill that had to be swallowed.

In May 1956, 8th Punjab and Bahawalpur Regiments were absorbed by the Baluch Regiment, adopting the insignia and uniform of the Baluchis. In 1955, the Regimental Centre moved to Multan from Quetta, where it had relocated from Lahore in 1952. The three regimental centres were integrated at Multan, where Colonel Raja Muhammad Sarwar Khan of 8th Punjab Regiment was appointed the first commandant of the reconstituted Baluch Regimental Centre. All titles pertaining to the British royalty were removed for the nomenclature of military units and the 4th Battalion lost its designation of 'Prince of Wales's Own'. The new class composition of the old 8th Punjabi battalions was fixed

as Punjabi Muslims and Muslim Sindhi-Balochis (MSBs) in equal proportion.[12] All battalions of the reconstituted regiment were renumbered, with the first five battalions of 8th Punjab Regiment taking precedence because of their seniority (Appendix VIII). On 7 May 1956, the amalgamation came into effect, and 8th Punjab Regiment passed into history.

Afterword

The sepoy has been reviled by some as a mercenary. But the charge is rather simplistic if not downright malicious. Mercenaries do not go out to die in their thousands or win Victoria Crosses in their dozens for a few rupees. There had to be something more than money that made these men serve and fight the way they did. And that something was: *Honour*. It was honour that kept them true to their oath and led them to such extraordinary feats of bravery and self-sacrifice; and made the British Indian Army envy of the world. Reservations of the cynics aside, the sepoys were, and still are, the finest soldiers in the world—a fact attested by their innumerable exploits in battlefields all over the world.

The saga of 8th Punjabi valour did not end with their amalgamation with the Baluch Regiment in 1956. Exemplified by their new motto of *Ghazi ya Shaheed,*[1] they would go on to write new chapters of bravery and sacrifice as Baluchi battalions. After serving with 1 Baluch (1/8th Punjab) for more than a year in the icy wasteland of Siachen, one of the harshest battlefields in the world, I was convinced, like many before me, that my battalion was the finest in the world. But it was no sentimental notion of loyalty towards men with whom I had shared a hard time. The cheerful singing of a Punjabi sepoy at 19,000 feet under enemy shelling or the wide grin on the ice-encrusted face of a Ranghar in a blinding blizzard would be enough to convince anyone that he is in the company of extraordinary men.

Kai Kai.

Appendix I
Genealogy of 8th Punjab Regiment

1st Battalion

1798 3rd Extra Battalion Madras Native Infantry
1800 1st Battalion 15th Regiment (MacLeod) Madras Native Infantry
1824 29th Regiment Madras Native Infantry
1885 29th Regiment Madras Infantry
1893 29th Regiment (7th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry
1901 29th Burma Infantry
1903 89th Punjabis
1917 1st Battalion 89th Punjabis
1922 1st Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 1st Battalion The Baluch Regiment

2nd Battalion

1799 Masulipatam Battalion Madras Native Infantry
1800 2nd Battalion 15th Regiment (Crewe) Madras Native Infantry
1824 30th Regiment Madras Native Infantry
1885 30th Regiment Madras Infantry
1892 30th Regiment (5th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry
1901 30th Burma Infantry
1903 90th Punjabis
1918 1st Battalion 90th Punjabis
1922 90th Punjabis
1922 2nd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 2nd Battalion The Baluch Regiment

3rd Battalion

1800 1st Battalion 16th Regiment (Jennerett) Madras Native Infantry
1812 Trichinopoly Light Infantry
1824 31st Regiment or Trichinopoly Light Infantry
1885 31st Regiment (Trichinopoly) Madras (Light) Infantry
1892 31st Regiment (6th Burma Battalion) Madras (Light) Infantry
1901 31st Burma Light Infantry
1903 91st Punjabis

1904 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry)
1918 1st Battalion 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry)
1921 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry)
1922 3rd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 3rd Battalion The Baluch Regiment

4th Battalion
1800 2nd Battalion 16th Regiment (Dyce) Madras Native Infantry
1824 32nd Regiment Madras Native Infantry
1885 32nd Regiment Madras Infantry
1890 4th Regiment Burma Infantry
1891 32nd Regiment (4th Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry
1901 32nd Burma Infantry
1903 92nd Punjabis
1922 92nd Prince of Wales's Own Punjabis
1922 4th Battalion (Prince of Wales's Own) 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 4th Battalion The Baluch Regiment

5th Battalion
1800 1st Battalion 17th Regiment (Wahab) Madras Native Infantry
1824 33rd Regiment Madras Native Infantry
1885 33rd Regiment Madras Infantry
1890 3rd Regiment Burma Infantry
1891 33rd Regiment (3rd Burma Battalion) Madras Infantry
1901 33rd Burma Infantry
1903 93rd Burma Infantry
1922 5th (Burma) Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 5th Battalion The Baluch Regiment

6th Battalion
1940 6th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1948 Disbanded on 31 January; re-raised on 1 October
1956 13th Battalion The Baluch Regiment

7th Battalion
1940 7th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1942 Taken prisoner at Singapore

8th Battalion

1941 8th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1956 17th Battalion The Baluch Regiment

9th Battalion

1941 9th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1946 Disbanded
1948 Re-raised
1956 18th Battalion The Baluch Regiment

10th Battalion

1917 2nd Battalion 89th Punjabis
1922 10th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment (Training Battalion)
1942 10/8th Punjab Regimental Training Centre
1943 8th Punjab Regimental Centre
1956 Amalgamated with the Baluch Regimental Centre

14th Battalion

1941 14th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1942 9th (Punjab) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Indian Artillery
1946 Disbanded

15th Battalion

1941 15th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1946 Disbanded

16th Battalion

1943 16th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1946 Disbanded

25th (Garrison) Battalion

1941 25th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1946 Disbanded

26th (Garrison) Battalion

1942 26th Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment
1946 Disbanded

2/90th Punjabis
1918 2nd Battalion 90th Punjabis
1922 Disbanded

2/91st Punjabis
1918 2nd Battalion 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry)
1921 Disbanded

108 Garrison Company
1943 108 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

208 Garrison Company
1939 6 Indian Garrison Company
1945 208 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

308 Garrison Company
1939 9 Indian Garrison Company
1945 308 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

408 Garrison Company
1940 24 Indian Garrison Company
1945 408 Garrison Company
1956 211 Garrison Company

508 Garrison Company
1940 25 Indian Garrison Company
1945 508 Garrison Company
1956 212 Garrison Company

608 Garrison Company
1940 30 Indian Garrison Company
1945 608 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

708 Garrison Company

1940 36 Indian Garrison Company
1945 708 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

808 Garrison Company

1940 36 Indian Pioneer Company
1941 1210 Pioneer Company
1942 34 Indian Garrison Company
1945 808 Garrison Company
1956 213 Garrison Company

908 Garrison Company

1941 1st Auxiliary Pioneer Battalion
1942 66 Indian Garrison Company
1945 908 Garrison Company
1956 214 Garrison Company

1008 Garrison Company

1943 79 Indian Defence Company
1945 1008 Garrison Company
1946 Disbanded

Appendix II
Campaigns and Operations

Battalion	*Campaigns/Operations*
1/8th Punjab	Ceylon 1818 Malacca 1831-32 Third Burma War 1885-87 Yemen 1914 Egypt 1914-15 Gallipoli 1915 France 1915 Mesopotamia 1915-16, 1917-18 Northwest Frontier 1916 Salonika 1918 Trans-Caucasia 1918-20 Malaya & Singapore 1941-42
2/8th Punjab	Third Mahratta War 1817-18 First Burma War 1824-26 Second Burma War 1852-54 Central India 1857-58 Second Afghan War 1878-80 Third Burma War 1885-87 Mesopotamia 1915-18 Third Afghan War 1919 Northwest Frontier 1936-37 Burma 1943, ’45 French Indochina 1945-46
3/8th Punjab	Third Mahratta War 1817-18 Coorg War 1834 Central India 1857-58 Burma 1892-96 China 1900 Mesopotamia 1916-18

Battalion	*Campaigns/Operations*
	Palestine 1918 NW Frontier 1921-23, 1930-31 Iraq 1941-43 Italy 1943-45
4/8th Punjab (PWO)	Poligar Rebellion 1801 Travancore War 1808-09 First Burma War 1824-26 Coorg War 1834 Central India 1857-58 Burma 1890-94 Egypt 1914-15 Mesopotamia 1915-18 Palestine 1918 Northwest Frontier 1937-39 Iraq & Iran 1941-45 Kashmir 1948
5/8th Punjab (Burma)	Second Mahratta War 1803-05 Travancore War 1808-09 Central India 1857-58 Burma 1891-93 Egypt 1914-15 France 1915 Mesopotamia 1915-18 Palestine 1918 NW Frontier 1924-25, 1940-41 Burma 1942-43 Dutch East Indies 1945-46 Kashmir 1948
6/8th Punjab	Dutch East Indies 1945-46
7/8th Punjab	Singapore 1942

Battalion	***Campaigns/Operations***
8/8th Punjab	Burma 1943 Dutch East Indies 1945-46 Kashmir 1948
9/8th Punjab	-
10/8th Punjab	Third Afghan War 1919 Iraq 1920
2/90th Punjabis	Third Afghan War 1919 Northwest Frontier 1920-21
2/91st Punjabis	-
14/8th Punjab	-
15/8th Punjab	-
16/8th Punjab	-
25/8th Punjab	-
26/8th Punjab	-

Appendix III
Campaign and Battle Honours

Cochin, Maheidpoor, Ava, Afghanistan 1878-80, Burma 1885-87, China 1900

Loos, France and Flanders 1915, Macedonia 1918, Helles, Krithia, Gallipoli 1915, Suez Canal, Egypt 1915, Megiddo, Sharon, Palestine 1918, Tigris 1916, Kut al Amara 1917, Baghdad, Khan Baghdadi, Mesopotamia 1915-18

Afghanistan 1919

North Malaya, Jitra, Gurun, Kampar, Malaya 1941-42, The Trigno, Perano, The Sangro, Gustav Line, Monte Grande, The Senio, Italy 1943-45, Donbaik, North Arakan, The Shweli, Myitson, Kama, Burma 1942-45

Campaign and Battle Honours were instituted more than two hundred years ago and were usually awarded only to the infantry and the cavalry. A Campaign Honour signifies the presence of a unit in a particular theatre of war, while a Battle Honour denotes active participation in the battle. These honours are emblazoned on the Regimental Colours, Standards and Appointments of the regiments and battalions, and are a source of pride and distinction. The procedure for awarding these honours has not always followed a standard set of rules and over the years, has undergone many changes. For example, before the First World War, Battle Honours were not awarded for failed campaigns, but this was changed, as it was considered unfair to units that had performed gallantly even in defeat. The awarding of the honours could also at times be illogical and unjust with many regiments failing to get recognition despite having played a prominent role in a battle, while others received honours without firing a shot. One example is that of the campaign in Central India in 1857-58, where four battalions of 8th Punjab

Regiment were engaged, the 5th Battalion quite actively, yet none received the Campaign Honour.

The unprecedented scale of the First World War resulted in battles that at times lasted for days or weeks, with several separate actions. This resulted in Battle Honours being awarded both for the main battle as well as additional honours for the more important subsidiary actions. For example, the Battle Honour of 'Megiddo' covers the main British offensive in Palestine in September 1918, while 'Sharon' is a subsidiary honour awarded for the initial breakthrough in the coastal Plain of Sharon. After 1922, when the modern regimental system was introduced in the Indian Army, all the battalions of a regiment were allowed to carry the Battle and Campaign Honours of their sister units. The decision was probably taken to foster *esprit de corps* among the battalions of the newly constituted regiments. Thus all 8th Punjabi battalions started carrying the Battle Honour of 'Maheidpoor' even though the honour belonged to the 3rd Battalion only. Continuing in the same vein, the honours for the First World War, which were finalized in 1926, were awarded to regiments, and not individual battalions. Thus the 2nd Battalion gained honours for battles fought in France, Egypt, Palestine and Gallipoli, without ever having set a foot there. The system was rather confusing, and it was discarded after the Second World War.

The First World War also brought in other changes in the award and presentation of the honours. The long conflict had resulted in numerous battles with many regiments receiving dozens of Battle Honours, and it was not possible to display them all on the Regimental Colours. A solution was found by asking the regiments to select ten honours for the First World War, which were then emblazoned on the King's Colours—the previous honours continuing as before on the Regimental Colours.[1] The honours that were selected by the regiments appeared in bold letters in the Army List. The Battle Honours for the Second World War were finalized after the partition of India, and a different system was adopted in the Indian and Pakistan Armies. The honours were awarded to individual battalions rather than regiments, thus avoiding the confusion created in 1926.

Appendix IV
Awards and Decorations[1]

FIRST WORLD WAR 1914-18

Victoria Cross (VC)[2]	1
Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB)[3]	1
Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE)[4]	1
Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG)[5]	2
Distinguished Service Order (DSO)[6]	13
Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)[7]	6
Indian Order of Merit (IOM),[8] 2nd Class	34
Military Cross (MC)[9]	27
Bar to MC	1
Order of British India (OBI),[10] 1st Class	1
Order of British India (OBI), 2nd Class	9
Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM)[11]	95
Bar to IDSM	1
Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)[12]	187
Foreign Decorations	25
Mention in Despatches	220[13]
Brevet Promotions	9

Victoria Cross (VC)

Nk Shahamad Khan	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB)

Maj Gen HDU Keary	91st Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE)

Maj Gen HDU Keary	91st Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917

Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG)

1.	Col LWY Campbell	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
2.	Lt Col TR Maclachlan	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

1.	Capt CHF Nixon	91st Punjabis	France	1915
2.	Lt Col HW Jackson	90th Punjabis	France	1915
3.	Capt E Butterfield	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
4.	Maj NM Geoghegan	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

5.	Capt JD Crawford	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
6.	Capt WK Rebsch	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
7.	Capt NC Taylor	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
8.	Maj WH Hastings	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
9.	Lt Col HA Carleton	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
10.	Maj BE Morgan	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1917
11.	Maj EC Kensington	91st Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
12.	Lt Col WS Prentis	89th Punjabis	Palestine	1918
13.	Capt WGK Broome	89th Punjabis	Burma	1919

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

1.	Capt GC Bampfield	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
2.	Lt Col EH Waring	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
3.	Lt Col CE Dease	91st Punjabis	India	1919
4.	Maj WSJ Scruby	1/89th Punjabis	Trans-Caucasia	1919
5.	Capt MHA Campbell	1/89th Punjabis	Trans-Caucasia	1919
6.	Lt HPS Bullock	1/89th Punjabis	Trans-Caucasia	1919

Indian Order of Merit (IOM), 2nd Class

1.	Sep Dasaunda Singh	89th Punjabis	Suez Canal	1915
2.	Hav Muhammad Azim	92nd Punjabis	Suez Canal	1915
3.	Nk Mihan Singh	92nd Punjabis	Suez Canal	1915
4.	Sep Partab Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
5.	L/Nk Kunda Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
6.	Jem Kishan Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
7.	Sep Indar Singh	89th Punjabis	France	1915
8.	Sep Suleiman	89th Punjabis	France	1915
9.	Hav Hira Tiwari	89th Punjabis	France	1915
10.	SM Firman Ali	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
11.	Jem Hazara Singh	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
12.	L/Nk Ghulam Ali	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
13.	Nk Mahtab Ali	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
14.	Sub Zaman Shah	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
15.	Hav Rampersan Tiwari	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
16.	SM M Bakhsh	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1916
17.	Jem Indar Singh	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1916
18.	SAS Lal Singh	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1916
19.	Jem Abdul Akbar	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

20. Jem Partab Singh	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
21. Nk Balkaran Misir	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
22. Sep Ganda Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
23. Nk Jhanda Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
24. Sub Karam Dad	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1917
25. Hav Channan Shah	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1917
26. Sub Lachman Singh	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1917
27. Sub Sher Singh	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
28. Sep Atta Muhammad	91st Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
29. Sep Balwant Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
30. Sub Mula Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
31. Hav Ashraf Khan	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
32. Sub Khan Zaman	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
33. Nk Buta Khan	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
34. Hav M Sowar	93rd Burma Inf	Palestine	1918

Military Cross (MC)

1. Lt PJR Wigley	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
2. 2/Lt AL Hill	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1915
3. Capt RFD Burnett	89th Punjabis	France	1915
4. Lt JC Brewer	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
5. Capt JD Crawford	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
6. Sub Bir Singh	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
7. Capt SD Sondhi, IMS	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
8. Maj EC Kensington	91st Punjabis	Mesopotamia	
9. Capt WR James	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
10. Lt WS Haycraft	93rd Burma Inf	Mesopotamia	1916
11. Capt HD Cloete	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
12. Capt WCET Fox-Male	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
13. Capt J Campbell	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
14. SM Firman Ali	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
15. Lt KHH Kennedy	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
16. Lt Hari Chand, IMS	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
17. Capt TJ Ponting	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
18. Capt FO Harris	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
19. 2/Lt HS Morris	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
20. Lt AS Sullivan	91st Punjabis	Palestine	1918

21.	Capt NI Graham	91st Punjabis	Palestine	1918
22.	Sub Harnam Singh	93rd Burma Inf	Palestine	1918
23.	Capt PJW McClenaghan	93rd Burma Inf	Palestine	1918
24.	Capt JS Hannah	1/89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1918
25.	Lt RJ Mackay	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
26.	Capt AJ D'Souza, IMS	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
27.	Sub Shaikh Abdullah	93rd Burma Inf	Palestine	1919

Bar to MC

	Capt WS Haycraft	93rd Burma Inf	Palestine	1918

Order of British India (OBI), 1st Class

	SM Firman Ali	92nd Punjabis	1918

Order of British India (OBI), 2nd Class

1.	SM Sunder Singh	89th Punjabis	1915
2.	SM Firman Ali	92nd Punjabis	1915
3.	Sub Fazal Hussain	92nd Punjabis	1916
4.	Sub Fazal Hussain	93rd Burma Infantry	1916
5.	Sub Imam Din	90th Punjabis	1917
6.	Sub Thakur Singh	91st Punjabis	1918
7.	Sub Mohammad Azim	92nd Punjabis	1918
8.	Sub Saida Khan	89th Punjabis	1919
9.	Sub Surju Singh	91st Punjabis	1919

Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM)

89th Punjabis	27
90th Punjabis	12
91st Punjabis	8
92nd Punjabis	30
93rd Burma Infantry	18

Bar to IDSM

92nd Punjabis	1

Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

89th Punjabis	27
1/90th Punjabis	4
2/90th Punjabis	3
91st Punjabis	40
92nd Punjabis	49
93rd Burma Infantry	58

FOREIGN AWARDS

Cross of St. George, 2nd Class (Russia)

Nk Shahamad Khan 89th Punjabis

Cross of St. George, 4th Class (Russia)

Sep Gyan Singh 90th Punjabis

Medal of St. George, 2nd Class (Russia)

Nk Bahadur Khan 93rd Burma Infantry

Medal of St. George, 4th Class (Russia)

Sep Buta Singh 90th Punjabis

Order of St. Stanislas, 3rd Class (With Swords) (Russia)

1. Lt Col ERB Murray 90th Punjabis
2. Col TR Maclachlan 92nd Punjabis

Officer of the Order of Agricultural Merit (France)

Col HW Jackson 90th Punjabis

Croix de Guerre (France)

Capt TJ Ponting 92nd Punjabis

Croix de Guerre (Belgium)

SM Mohammad Abdul 93rd Burma Infantry

Bronze Medal for Military Valour (Italy)

Hav Sundar Singh 90th Punjabis

Officer of the Order of the Crown of Roumania (Romania)

Lt Col JHF Lakin 92nd Punjabis

Medaille Barbatie si Credinta, 3rd Class (Romania)

1. L/Nk Baghel Singh 1/89th Punjabis
2. Sep Balwant Singh 90th Punjabis
3. Sep Rur Singh 90th Punjabis

Order of Karageorge, 2nd Class (With Swords) (Serbia)

Lt Gen HDU Keary 91st Punjabis

Order of White Eagle, 3rd Class (With Swords) (Serbia)

1. Col LWY Campbell 89th Punjabis
2. Lt Col HA Carleton 90th Punjabis

Order of White Eagle, 5th Class (With Swords) (Serbia)

Capt JD Crawford 89th Punjabis

Cross of Karageorge, 1st Class (With Swords) (Serbia)

Hav Sobha Singh 90th Punjabis

Serbian Medal for Bravery (Gold)

1. L/Nk Bhaghail Singh 89th Punjabis
2. L/Nk Mangal Singh 90th Punjabis
3. L/Nk Ali Ahmed Khan 90th Punjabis

Serbian Medal for Bravery (Silver)

1. Hav Nur Mohammad 1/89th Punjabis
2. Sep Shera Khan 93rd Burma Infantry

Order of the Nile, 4th Class (Egypt)

SM Muhammad Abdul 93rd Burma Infantry

SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45

Victoria Cross (VC)	2
Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB)	1
Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE)	1
Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)	4
Distinguished Service Order (DSO)	6
Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)	12
Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)	9
Indian Order of Merit (IOM), 2nd Class	7
Military Cross (MC)	28
Bar to MC	1
Order of British India (OBI), 1st Class	28
Order of British India (OBI), 2nd Class	43
Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM)	32
Military Medal (MM)[14]	20
Mention in Despatches	129

Victoria Cross

1. Hav Parkash Singh	5/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
2. Sep Kamal Ram	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944

Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB)

Gen EP Quinan	3/8th Punjab	1945

Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire (KCIE)

Lt Gen EP Quinan	3/8th Punjab	1942

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

1. Col PG Westmacott	5/8th Punjab	1941
2. Maj Gen DFW Warren	6/8th Punjab	1945

3.	Brig TR Henry	2/8th Punjab		1945
4.	Brig DJ Wilson-Haffenden	3/8th Punjab		1945

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

1.	Lt Col DFW Warren	6/8th Punjab	Burma	1940
2.	Lt Col HL Wyndham	3/8th Punjab	Burma	1942
3.	Lt Col W Sandison	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
4.	Lt Col WF Brown	2/8th Punjab		1944
5.	Lt Col SEC Walker	1/8th Punjab	Italy	1945
6.	Lt Col BW Roe	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

1.	Lt Col DJ Wilson-Haffenden	3/8th Punjab	1940
2.	Capt JO Graham	1/8th Punjab	1942
3.	Lt Col G Creffield	1/8th Punjab	1943
4.	Lt Col WF Brown	2/8th Punjab	1943
5.	Lt Col JS Garrett	2/8th Punjab	1943
6.	Lt Col WMF Gamble	3/8th Punjab	1943
7.	Lt Col DFW Warren	6/8th Punjab	1943
8.	Brig TR Henry	2/8th Punjab	1944
9.	Lt Col AA Agar	3/8th Punjab	1944
10.	Col FC Booty	1/8th Punjab	1946
11.	Lt Col BW Roe	2/8th Punjab	1946
12.	Lt Col W Sandison	3/8th Punjab	1946

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

1.	Maj CE Townsend	Regimental Centre	1944
2.	Maj FAJW Hunter	9/8th Punjab	1945
3.	Maj CD Buckle	2/8th Punjab	1945
4.	Capt Shamsher Singh Gill	3/8th Punjab	
5.	Capt CE James	1/8th Punjab	1946
6.	Capt Abdul Wahid	8th Punjab Regiment [15]	1946
7.	Maj KA Bayley	8th Punjab Regiment	1946
8.	Maj WB Butt	8th Punjab Regiment	1946
9.	SM Atta Mohammad	7/8th Punjab	1947

Indian Order of Merit (IOM), 2nd Class

1.	Hav Lal Singh	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1942
2.	Nk Godhu Ram	5/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
3.	Hav Kuldip Singh	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944

4.	L/Nk Allah Dad	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
5.	SM Chet Ram	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
6.	Sub Sumera Ram	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
7.	Hav Maj M Akbar	5/8th Punjab	Dutch East Ind	1945

Military Cross (MC)

1.	Lt AGG Williamson	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
2.	Sub Vir Singh	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1942
3.	Capt ED Coyle	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
4.	Jem Mohammad Khan	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
5.	Maj RS Garewal	5/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
6.	Capt D Trenam	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
7.	Capt Girdhari Singh	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
8.	Jem Gul Mohammad	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
9.	Capt P Crook	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
10.	Sub Joginder Singh	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
11.	Jem Ghazan Khan	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
12.	Jem Ram Phal	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
13.	Jem Des Raj	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
14.	Jem Ant Ram	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
15.	Capt PC Seyler	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1945
16.	Maj Wisal M Khan	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
17.	Maj AT Elsom	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
18.	Maj JNF Hillis	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
19.	Maj DJ Parsons	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
20.	Maj Nazar Hussain	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
21.	Sub Raj Wali Khan	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
22.	Sub Ali Dad	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
23.	Sub Nadan Ram	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
24.	Sub Chhotu Ram	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
25.	Sub Masahib Khan	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
26.	Sub Rajab Ali	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
27.	Sub Sher Bahadur	8/8th Punjab	Dutch East Ind	1946
28.	Jem Phul Singh	8/8th Punjab	Dutch East Ind	1946

Bar to MC

Maj Girdhari Singh	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944

Order of British India (OBI), 1st Class

1.	H/Lt Arjan Singh	1/8th Punjab
2.	SM Likhi Ram	8th Punjab Regiment
3.	H/Lt Habibullah Khan	25/8th Punjab
4.	H/Lt Shamsher Ali	25/8th Punjab
5.	H/Lt Sondha Khan	15/8th Punjab
6.	H/Lt Jahan Dad Khan	15/8th Punjab
7.	H/Lt Sher Baz	5/8th Punjab
8.	SM Chet Ram	3/8th Punjab
9.	SM Ram Lal Singh	4/8th Punjab
10.	H/Lt Ghulam Mohammad	26/8th Punjab
11.	H/Lt Lal Singh	25/8th Punjab
12.	SM Indar Singh	2/8th Punjab
13.	H/Capt Mohammad Sadiq	8th Punjab Regimental Centre
14.	SM Mohammad Akbar	2/8th Punjab
15.	SM Atta Mohammad	7/8th Punjab
16.	Sub Mohammad Afzal Khan	8th Punjab Regimental Centre
17.	SM Najabat Ali	4/8th Punjab
18.	Sub Sunder Singh	1/8th Punjab
19.	Sub Gurdit Singh	14/8th Punjab
20.	Sub Hadait Ali	2/8th Punjab
21.	Sub Dost Mohammad	24 Indian Garrison Company
22.	SM Nand Singh	9/8th Punjab
23.	Sub Khan Zaman	4/8th Punjab
24.	Sub Noor Dad	36 Indian Garrison Company
25.	Sub Battan Singh	5/8th Punjab
26.	Sub Faqir Mohammad	8th Punjab Regiment
27.	Sub Jiwan Khan	2/8th Punjab
28.	SM Likhi Shah	1/8th Punjab

Order of British India (OBI), 2nd Class

1.	SM Mohammad Akbar	6/8th Punjab
2.	Sub Mohammad Nawaz	26/8th Punjab
3.	Sub Fazal Shah	25/8th Punjab
4.	Sub Noor Mohammad	26/8th Punjab
5.	Sub Amar Singh	6 Indian Garrison Company
6.	Sub Sohan Singh	25/8th Punjab

7.	Sub Kartar Singh	9 Indian Garrison Company
8.	Sub Noor Dad	36 Indian Garrison Company
9.	SM Feroze Khan	5/8th Punjab
10.	Sub Jiwan Khan	2/8th Punjab
11.	Sub Sardar Khan	6/8th Punjab
12.	Sub Faqir Mohammad	1/8th Punjab
13.	Sub Mohammad Alam	8th Punjab Regiment
14.	Sub Battan Singh	5/8th Punjab
15.	Jem Munsha Singh	8th Punjab Regiment
16.	Sub Muhammad Hayat	108 Garrison Company
17.	Sub Ram Rattan	8th Punjab Regiment
18.	SM Baddan Singh	4/8th Punjab
19.	Sub Rehmat Khan	608 Garrison Company
20.	Sub Amar Singh	3/8th Punjab
21.	Sub Sardar Khan	7/8th Punjab
22.	SM Parbh Dayal	25/8th Punjab
23.	Sub Nandan Ram	1/8th Punjab
24.	Sub Ghulam Muhammad	7/8th Punjab
25.	Sub Santa Singh	7/8th Punjab
26.	Sub Fazal Ahmed	1/8th Punjab
27.	Sub Jagir Singh	1/8th Punjab
28.	Sub Sardar Ali	1/8th Punjab
29.	Sub Nawaz Khan	1/8th Punjab
30.	Sub Mohammad Bukhsh	7/8th Punjab
31.	Jem Faqir Mohammad	7/8th Punjab
32.	Jem Mohammad Khan	7/8th Punjab
33.	Jem Fateh Mehdi	7/8th Punjab
34.	SM Likhi Shah	1/8th Punjab
35.	Ris Faiz M Khan	8th Punjab Regiment
36.	Sub Faiz Alam Khan	2/8th Punjab
37.	Sub Ganda Singh	8th Punjab Regiment
38.	Sub Feroze Khan	3/8th Punjab
39.	Sub Wazir Mohammad	8th Punjab Regiment
40.	SM Sanawar Khan	6/8th Punjab
41.	Sub Raj Wali	2/8th Punjab
42.	Sub Mohammad Sadiq	8th Punjab Regiment

43. Sub Ali Dad 2/8th Punjab

Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM)

2/8th Punjab	1
3/8th Punjab	16
4/8th Punjab	6
5/8th Punjab	8
8/8th Punjab	1

Military Medal (MM)

2/8th Punjab	9
3/8th Punjab	10
5/8th Punjab	1

Appendix V
War Casualties[1]

First World War 1914-18

	BOs		IOs		ORs			
	K	**W**	**K**	**W**	**K**	**W**	**POW**	**Total**
89th Punjabis	7	14	5	14	199	762	17	1018
90th Punjabis	4	7	2	12	152	275	-	452
91st Punjabis[2]	1	1	2	7	182	250	-	443
92nd Punjabis	15	20	7	25	249	1275	-	1591
93rd Burma Inf	12	17	9	18	214	887	-	1157
2/89th Punjabis	1	NA	-	NA	24	NA	-	25
Total	40	59	25	76	1020	3449	17	4686

Second World War 1939-45

	Officers			VCOs/ORs			
	K	**W**	**POW**	**K**	**W**	**POW**	**Total**
1/8th Punjab[3]	8	NA	12	315	NA	1045	NA
2/8th Punjab	2	1	-	152	NA	-	NA
3/8th Punjab	10	10	2	304	916	47	1289
4/8th Punjab	1	-	-	25	-	-	26
5/8th Punjab	5	3	1	182	91	101	383
6/8th Punjab	1	1	-	17	2	-	21
7/8th Punjab[4]	7	NA	NA	159	NA	500+	NA
8/8th Punjab	1	-	-	51	72	-	124
9/8th Punjab	2	-	-	24	-	-	26
16/8th Punjab	-	-	-	7	-	-	7
8th Punjab Regt[5]	8	-	-	67	-	-	75
208 Garrison Coy	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
808 Garrison Coy	-	-	-	1	3	-	4
908 Garrison Coy	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Total	45	NA	NA	1309	NA	1700+	NA

K = Killed, W = Wounded, POW = Prisoners of War, NA = Data Not Available
BOs = British Officers, IOs = Indian Officers, VCOs = Viceroy Commissioned Officers, ORs = Other Ranks

Officers killed/died during the First World War

	Name	Unit	Place	Year
1.	Capt LFA Cochran	92nd Punjabis	Suez Canal	1915
2.	Lt H Greene	92nd Punjabis	Gallipoli	1915
3.	Lt GE Masters	89th Punjabis	Gallipoli	1915
4.	2/Lt SV Hasluck	89th Punjabis	Gallipoli	1915
5.	Maj HWF Ricketts	93rd Burma Infantry	Gallipoli	1915
6.	Capt FL Dyer	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1915
7.	Capt EJ Burdett	89th Punjabis	France	1915
8.	Capt D Dudley	91st Punjabis	France	1915
9.	Lt OP Gwynne	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
10.	Capt AH Dobbs	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
11.	Capt RI Binnings	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
12.	Lt FW Sprott	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
13.	Capt AST Reilly	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
14.	Capt AM Senior	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
15.	Lt RJK Todd	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
16.	Lt Col SR Stevens	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
17.	Lt CD Bright	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
18.	Maj WH Simpson	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
19.	Capt GH Barrett	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
20.	Capt E Cummings	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
21.	Lt JG Swaine	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
22.	Lt Col J Whitehead	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
23.	Lt EH Wilsey	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
24.	Lt JB Pearson	93rd Burma Infantry	Mesopotamia	1916
25.	Capt CSB Martin	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
26.	2/Lt W Wynne	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
27.	Capt DB Morris	90th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
28.	Capt CH Clibborn	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
29.	Capt EB Fawcett	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
30.	Capt HTP Harris	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
31.	Capt P Wood	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
32.	Capt HT Rohde	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916
33.	2/Lt TOH Bates	89th Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1916

	Name	Unit	Place	Year
34.	2/Lt FP Newbury	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
35.	Lt GJ Mcade	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
36.	Lt JH Christopher	92nd Punjabis	Mesopotamia	1917
37.	Capt M Browne	92nd Punjabis	Palestine	1918
38.	Capt JED Prothero	90th Punjabis	Persia	1918
39.	Lt W St M Gibbon	2/89th Punjabis	India	1918
40.	2/Lt GN Haymes	1/89th Punjabis	Palestine	1918

Officers killed/died during the Second World War

1.	Lt Col GF Faulkner	5/8th Punjab	NWFP	1940
2.	Capt RR Chhikara	5/8th Punjab	NWFP	1940
3.	2/Lt MB Abhyankar	8th Punjab Regiment		1941
4.	Maj Bradshaw-Smith	8th Punjab Regiment	India	1941
5.	Lt Col RCS Bates	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
6.	Capt CJC Alabaster	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
7.	Capt MI Jennings	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
8.	Capt FA Giles	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
9.	2/Lt Abdullah Khan	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1941
10.	Lt CD Lamb	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1942
11.	Capt JO Graham	1/8th Punjab	Malaya	1942
12.	Capt Dalip Singh	1/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
13.	2/Lt GA Holman	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
14.	2/Lt D Gethin	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
15.	2/Lt HA Akbar	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
16.	2/Lt CJ Durrant	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
17.	Capt D Hammond	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
18.	Lt FE White	7/8th Punjab	Singapore	1942
19.	Lt JT Lundie	3/8th Punjab	Iraq	1942
20.	Maj JL Woodhouse	8th Punjab Regiment	Burma	1942
21.	Maj JA Adams	4/8th Punjab		1942
22.	Capt MA Rikhi	8th Punjab Regiment	India	1943
23.	Maj GG Pryce	5/8th Punjab	India	1943
24.	Maj IW Campbell	Regimental Centre	India	1943
25.	2/Lt DAJ Durham	5/8th Punjab	Burma	1943

	Name	Unit	Place	Year
26.	Lt KK Vermani	5/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
27.	Lt RP Gordon	8th Punjab Regiment	Burma	1943
28.	Capt C Partridge	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
29.	Capt JAF Eastwood	8/8th Punjab	Burma	1943
30.	Maj AJ Staples[6]	7/8th Punjab	Siam	1943
31.	Capt DR Stewart	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
32.	Capt PC Moon	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
33.	Lt AW Ingleton	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
34.	Lt PL Battershill	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
35.	Lt GM Longstaffe	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1943
36.	Lt ADS Buckle	8th Punjab Regiment	Burma	1944
37.	Maj WH Niall	9/8th Punjab	India	1944
38.	Maj Sujan Singh	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
39.	Lt RT King	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1944
40.	Capt RA Campion	8th Punjab Regiment	India	1944
41.	Lt M Akram	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1945
42.	Lt A Malik Khan	3/8th Punjab	Italy	1945
43.	Maj Gen D Warren	6/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
44.	Maj CIM Watson	2/8th Punjab	Burma	1945
45.	Lt Col FAJ Hunter	9/8th Punjab	India	1945

Appendix VI
Commanding Officers[1]

1/8th PUNJAB

1.	Col AK Gore	1 November 1865
2.	Col S Mainwaring	18 February 1873
3.	Col WC Phillips	20 December 1873
4.	Col HS Rammell	16 March 1876
5.	Col GN Johnstone	21 December 1879
6.	Col AHM Dickey	14 December 1880
7.	Col AT Baldwin	2 October 1884
8.	Col G Murray	21 August 1885
9.	Col WT Bereton	10 January 1889
10.	Col GE Weston	28 May 1890
11.	Lt Col GW Maxwell	16 October 1893
12.	Lt Col G Rippon	18 December 1896
13.	Lt Col HN Taylor, DSO	19 December 1905
14.	Lt Col CJW Grant, VC	1 February 1906
15.	Col CV Mainwaring	22 July 1907
16.	Col LWY Campbell, CMG	10 March 1913
17.	Col HW Jackson, DSO	10 March 1918
18.	Col NM Geoghegan, CB, DSO	14 September 1920
19.	Col HE Reinhold, MC	1 August 1924
20.	Lt Col SW Egerton	1 October 1925
21.	Lt Col WSJ Scruby, OBE	10 August 1926
22.	Lt Col NHM Watts, OBE	9 August 1930
23.	Lt Col D St J Baxter, OBE	5 February 1932
24.	Lt Col JC Brewer, MC	5 February 1936
25.	Lt Col WJ Crocker	30 July 1937
26.	Lt Col WA Lovat Fraser, CMG, OBE	1 October 1939
27.	Lt Col RCS Bates	29 January 1941
28.	Lt Col RCW Johns	13 December 1941

Battalion taken POW at Singapore 15 Feb 1942; Re-raised 16 May 1946.

29.	Lt Col CH Genders	22 May 1946
30.	Lt Col LJE Kewley	2 April 1947
31.	Lt Col MGD Kallue	20 September 1947

32.	Lt Col Nasir Ahmed Khan	23 November 1948
33.	Lt Col MGD Kallue	9 January 1950
34.	Lt Col Aziz Ur Rehman Khan	25 April 1951
35.	Lt Col Taifur Ul Islam	1 March 1952
36.	Lt Col Mohammad Muzaffar Khan	30 August 1952
37.	Lt Col Taifur Ul Islam	10 December 1952
38.	Lt Col Gulzar Ahmed Khan	1 May 1956

2/8th PUNJAB

1.	Col CE Walker	1 April 1867
2.	Col JG Halliday	30 April 1874
3.	Col VJ Shortland	26 June 1875
4.	Col TC Georges	24 September 1878
5.	Col PA Carnegy	1 August 1884
6.	Col FC St John	23 April 1886
7.	Col HED Bayley	10 July 1890
8.	Lt Col W Cook	1 February 1892
9.	Lt Col HN Taylor, DSO	1 February 1899
10.	Col CR Keate	19 December 1905
11.	Lt Col GA Ward	19 December 1910
12.	Lt Col RJT Savi	7 June 1913
13.	Lt Col ERB Murray	14 September 1916
14.	Col HW Jackson, CSI, DSO	14 September 1920
15.	Lt Col LCL Bayley	9 March 1922
16.	Lt Col HM Leapman	10 August 1926
17.	Lt Col GN Miller	10 August 1930
18.	Lt Col B Ivor Jones, DSO, MC	10 August 1934
19.	Lt Col TR Henry	10 August 1938
20.	Lt Col AG Campbell	13 May 1941
21.	Lt Col JS Garret, MBE	18 June 1943
22.	Lt Col BW Roe, DSO	2 May 1944
23.	Lt Col J St J Baxter	12 May 1946
24.	Lt Col Altaf Hussain	18 November 1948
25.	Lt Col Mohammad Nawaz Khan	30 December 1949
26.	Lt Col SD Ahmad	25 April 1953
27.	Lt Col Abdul Habib Khan	18 January 1956

3/8th PUNJAB

1.	Col JW Bayley	1 November 1865
2.	Col G Harkness	3 December 1867
3.	Col A Prichard	30 April 1874
4.	Col TH Stoddard	16 October 1874
5.	Col EF Waterman	1 June 1876
6.	Col RG Lewis	28 May 1877
7.	Col TL Scott	30 June 1880
8.	Col GN Stephens	11 Dec 1880
9.	Col KF Stevenson	25 February 1887
10.	Col CC Campbell, DSO	16 May 1890
11.	Col HD'U Keary, DSO	1 February 1892
12.	Lt Col AH Williams	28 April 1909
13.	Lt Col AB Murray	28 August 1914
14.	Lt Col WHF Basevi	28 April 1918
15.	Col EC Kensington, DSO, MC	1 February 1921
16.	Lt Col DG Robinson, DSO	2 December 1923
17.	Lt Col CE Dease, OBE	1 February 1925
18.	Col EP Quinan, OBE	1 February 1929
19.	Lt Col DG Porteous, OBE	1 February 1933
20.	Lt Col GC Bampfield, OBE	7 September 1935
21.	Lt Col RJ Mackay, OBE, MC	7 October 1938
22.	Lt Col JA Finlay, MC	April 41
23.	Lt Col HL Wyndham, DSO	7 April 1942
24.	Lt Col CJC Molony	October 1943
25.	Lt Col DM Cornah	12 December 1943
26.	Lt Col W Sandison	11 January 1944
27.	Lt Col JS Garrett, OBE	April 1946
28.	Lt Col Girdhari Singh, MC & Bar	26 April 1947
29.	Lt Col Raja Mohammad Sarwar Khan	1 August 1947
30.	Lt Col Khushi Mohammad	25 May 1948
31.	Lt Col SGMM Peerzada	February 1949
32.	Lt Col SD Ahmed	30 December 1949
33.	Lt Col Riaz Hussain	6 March 1951
34.	Lt Col Mohammad Akbar Khan	22 April 1953
35.	Lt Col Iftikhar Ahmed Chaudhry	10 January 1954

4/8th PUNJAB (PWO)

1.	Col WT Williams	1 November 1865
2.	Col FJ Fulton	21 May 1875
3.	Col J Swiney	2 September 1880
4.	Col FH Tyrrell	7 May 1886
5.	Col GH Oakes	14 December 1887
6.	Col ES Hastings, DSO	1 January 1891
7.	Col CJW Grant, VC	1 June 1907
8.	Lt Col HL Goodenough	10 February 1911
9.	Col TR Maclachlan, CMG	3 July 1915
10.	Lt Col MC Nangle	3 July 1919
11.	Lt Col VK Birch, DSO	17 April 1922
12.	Lt Col NC Taylor, DSO	16 January 1925
13.	Col WH Hastings, DSO	29 December 1926
14.	Lt Col FRM Campbell	27 May 1930
15.	Lt Col BH Matheson, MC	27 May 1933
16.	Lt Col RB Harward, OBE	1 October 1935
17.	Lt Col AJH Bourke	1 October 1938
18.	Lt Col AG Scotland, MC	2 February 1941
19.	Lt Col W Gracie	6 October 1944
20.	Lt Col Sawal Khan	14 October 1947
21.	Lt Col Khushi Mohammad	30 December 1949
22.	Lt Col Mohsin Abbas	14 April 1951
23.	Lt Col Khalil Ahmed	28 September 1953
24.	Lt Col Mirza Mohammad Afzal	12 December 1955

5/8th PUNJAB (Burma)

1.	Col AN Rich	1 November 1865
2.	Col WC Rich	1 January 1874
3.	Col WA Riach	10 September 1874
4.	Col RV Handyside	31 October 1878
5.	Col JL Benwell	11 June 1880
6.	Col W Rowlandson	19 December 1880
7.	Col SFMT Grant	6 September 1883
8.	Col JA Richmond	14 June 1889
9.	Maj EB Nixon	30 May 1890

10. Lt Col JE Preston, DSO	12 February 1891
11. Lt Col RG Iremonger	12 February 1898
12. Col SG Radcliff	12 February 1905
13. Lt Col JAG Rainsford	5 July 1909
14. Lt Col SR Stevens	5 July 1914
15. Lt Col JH Whitehead	31 May 1916
16. Lt Col A Bredin	28 August 1917
17. Lt Col AB Merriman	1 February 1921
18. Lt Col AO Sutherland, DSO	1 February 1925
19. Lt Col EH Pemberton	1 February 1929
20. Lt Col RH Wilson, MC	30 August 1931
21. Lt Col KA North, MC	30 August 1935
22. Lt Col PG Westmacott	30 September 1938
23. Lt Col GF Faulkner	30 September 1940
24. Lt Col RM Gore	8 January 1941
25. Lt Col RS Steed	31 March 1943
26. Lt Col DJ Wilson-Haffenden, CBE	17 December 1945
27. Maj Raja Mohammad Sarwar Khan	3 May 1946
28. Lt Col DJ Wilson-Haffenden, CBE	14 September 1946
29. Lt Col Fazal-ur-Rahman Kallue	24 March 1947
30. Lt Col NAK Niazi	8 November 1947
31. Lt Col Wisal Mohammed Khan, MC	18 December 1948
32. Maj Riaz Hussain	31 December 1949
33. Lt Col NAK Niazi	1 December 1950
34. Maj Abdul Ghafoor Khan	1 March 1951
35. Lt Col SR Khan	1 February 1952
36. Lt Col SA Leslie	1 May 1952
37. Lt Col Abdul Ghafoor Khan	1 July 1954

6/8th PUNJAB[2]

1. Lt Col DFW Warren	7 August 1940
2. Lt Col SB Good, OBE	September 1941
3. Lt Col CH Genders	February 1943
4. Lt Col CS Kauntze	May 1946
5. Lt Col Habib Ullah Khan Babar	September 1947

Battalion disbanded on 31 Jan 1948; Re-raised 1 Oct 1948.

6. Lt Col KM Nazir Khan 1 October 1948
7. Lt Col Aziz Ur Rehman Khan 29 February 1949
8. Lt Col Said Ud Din Khan 28 January 1950
9. Lt Col Habib Ullah Khan Babar 10 September 1950
10. Lt Col Zia Ul Latif Khan 4 March 1952
11. Lt Col SGMM Peerzada 8 March 1954
12. Lt Col Mohammad Sarwar Khan 25 December 1955

7/8th PUNJAB

Lt Col W Southern 7 August 1940

Battalion taken POW at Singapore on 15 Feb 1942. Not re-raised.

8/8th PUNJAB

1. Lt Col WK Trevelyan 1 May 1941
2. Lt Col GE Attwell 18 April 1943
3. Lt Col WHM Fawcett 20 October 1944
4. Lt Col JAV Bolam 7 May 1946
5. Lt Col DHD Gillan 10 October 1946
6. Lt Col Nazar Mohammad 28 December 1947
7. Lt Col Sultan Ali Shah 18 July 1948
8. Lt Col Nazar Mohammad 29 August 1948
9. Lt Col Nasir Ahmed Khan 5 January 1951
10. Lt Col Khushi Mohammad 28 January 1953
11. Lt Col Faiz Ahmed 19 November 1953
12. Lt Col Zia Ul Hassan 7 May 1956

9/8th PUNJAB[3]

1. Lt Col AGIA Goddard, OBE 15 May 1941
2. Lt Col ED Tims 6 September 1943
3. Lt Col FAJW Hunter, MBE July 1945
4. Lt Col KM Chambers August 1945

Reconstituted as 1/8th Punjab on 16 May 1946; Re-raised 30 Oct 1948.

5. Lt Col Mir Haider 11 December 1948
6. Lt Col MMH Barlas 5 July 1949
7. Lt Col Naeem Uz Zafar 27 January 1952
8. Lt Col Mohammad Akram Khan 2 March 1956

10/8th PUNJAB (Training Battalion)

1.	Lt Col AV Alexander	5 June 1917
2.	Lt Col GEB Oldfield	24 November 1917
3.	Col HE Reinhold, MC	1 October 1925
4.	Lt Col L Philips	24 June 1928
5.	Lt Col WLB Chapman	24 April 1929
6.	Lt Col NHL Watts, OBE	6 January 1932
7.	Lt Col JC Brewer, MC	11 January 1934
8.	Lt Col AHF Hogge	5 February 1936
9.	Lt Col AG Russell	5 February 1939
10.	Lt Col RDE Darrell	16 May 1941
11.	Col SA Jennison	20 October 1941

Re-designated as 8th Punjab Regimental Centre on 2 Feb 1943.

12.	Col AG Scotland, MC	1 July 1945
13.	Lt Col W Gracie	20 October 1947
14.	Lt Col Wisal Mohammed Khan, MC	8 December 1947
15.	Lt Col J St J Baxter	24 November 1948
16.	Lt Col SD Ahmed	25 August 1949
17.	Lt Col Nausherwan Khan	12 December 1949
18.	Lt Col MGD Kallue	16 March 1951
19.	Col Aziz Ur Rehman Khan	6 January 1954
20.	Col Raja Mohammad Sarwar Khan	1 February 1956

14/8th PUNJAB

1.	Lt Col A George	1 May 1941
2.	Maj Hughes	May 1944

Battalion disbanded in 1946**.**

16/8th PUNJAB

1.	Lt Col RM Gore	15 August 1943
2.	Lt Col Hari Singh	October 1945

Battalion disbanded on 1 April 1946.

Appendix VII
Uniforms & Badges[1-9]

During the early days of East India Company, their Indian troops were often a ragged bunch without any proper uniforms. However, the importance of uniform for discipline and appearance was soon recognized and by the end of the 18th century, the sepoys were clothed in distinctive uniforms of the Company's Armies. At the time of the raising of 8th Punjabi units, the sepoys of Madras Infantry wore short red coats with white waistcoats and short-like drawers (*cholnas* or *jangeas*), bound up by a blue cummerbund passing between the legs. Indian officers wore breeches. The headgear consisted of a flat blue turban of uniform pattern "placed in a soldier-like manner upon the head, edged round with blue tape of the same colour with facings". In 1797, it was replaced with a new turban, the frame of which was made of iron, and it was ornamented with a brass band and a leather cockade. The design was probably an effort to imitate the shako of British soldiers. The sepoys seem to have disliked the unwieldy shako/turban immensely. In 1806, the iron shako was replaced with a lighter one made from wicker. The sepoys wore sandals or went bare foot while Indian officers wore half-boots. The European officers continued to wear European-style uniforms, which must have made life very difficult for them in the Indian weather. They, however, were allowed to wear white hats while in the field or turbans wound around round hats. The colour of lace on officers' sleeves and stripes on the trousers was silver for the 1/15th, 2/15th, 1/16th and 2/16th Madras Native Infantry, while it was gold for 1/17th MNI. By 1832, all battalions were wearing gold lace.

In 1806, the portion of cummerbund, which extended between the legs, was abolished, and in 1812, the drawers were discarded in favour of white pantaloons. The colour of the pantaloons seems to have been a matter of particular interest for the authorities, as it was frequently changed over the years. There is mention of black pantaloons, red silk pantaloons, and in the case of 1/17th MNI, even yellow pantaloons! The last was probably an effort to conform to the colour of battalion's facings. A uniform pattern of sandals of a "light strong muster" was also

adopted "with a broad strap over the instep and a thin toe ring, a cord passing round the big toe". In 1812, 1/16th MNI was converted into Light Infantry, and it was authorized to wear cuffs and collars of deep green colour. The drummers wore green and red uniforms. The colour of lace was white with green stripe, and trimmings were gold with green stripe. In 1823, the officers of the unit were directed to wear green tufts in their caps instead of feathers.

In the 1830s, the British Army single-breasted coat without lapels was adopted and the cummerbund ceased to be a part of the sepoy's uniform although the British officers continued to wear it with their mess kits. The uniforms of the sepoys were progressively Europeanized so that by 1850, there was hardly any difference between the uniforms of the Indian and British troops. In 1850, a British officer described the uniformed Madras soldier as "a sepoy of the line dressed in a tight coat; trousers in which he can scarcely walk and cannot stoop at all; bound to an immense and totally useless knapsack, so that he can scarcely breathe; strapped, belted, clay-piped within a hair's-breadth of his life; with a rigid basket shako on his head, which requires skill of a juggler to balance there, and which cuts deep into his brow if worn for an hour; and with a leather stock around his neck, to complete his absurd costume".

Common sense finally prevailed and in 1853, a loose easy-fitting uniform was approved. The leather stock was abolished, the hated knapsack was modified, and the sandals were replaced with boots. In 1855, a long kurta-like tunic replaced the English coat. British officers also adopted a similar uniform with a Colonial Pattern helmet. The undress uniforms of the British and Indian officers were similar except for the headgear, with the Indians wearing the *pugri* and the British officers the pillbox cap. The demise of East India Company in 1858 provided the opportunity to make more sensible changes in the uniform. Khaki coloured uniforms were first introduced in 1860 but were soon replaced with white uniforms. A few years later, the Zouave jacket was introduced for Indian officers and men. It was essentially a collar-less tunic and was accompanied by *pyjamas* and *pugri*. British officers continued to wear the British pattern tunic of scarlet colour for the regiments of the line along with the regimental *pugri* wound around the

helmet. Their uniforms underwent numerous changes and modifications and were quite elaborate affairs with cocked hats and feathers, white leather breeches, long boots, silk handkerchiefs, gorgets, silver buttons, gold lace and swords with accoutrements; all costing a small fortune. However, with time, their uniforms too became simpler and much of the frippery was discarded.

In 1882, the colours of the facings were prescribed as white for 29th and 30th, emerald green for 31st, and yellow for 32nd and 33rd Madras Native Infantry. By 1883, khaki was widely adopted by the army, and the Zouave jackets were replaced with serge tunics. Knickerbockers and boots with *puttees* were introduced, especially when on the march. Khaki blouse was worn in the field. The *pugri* was also of khaki with a band of regimental facing and a fringe of the same colour. Crimson coloured *kullahs* around which the *pugri* was wound were introduced in 1892. When the units were reconstituted as Burma Battalions, they adopted drab colour (a pinkish shade of khaki) made famous by the Corps of Guides.

In 1903, the battalions were converted into Punjabi Regiments. Their colours of facings were blue (89th Punjabis), black (90th Punjabis), cherry (91st Punjabis), white (92nd Punjabis) and yellow (93rd Burma Infantry). Two photographs appearing in this volume show the uniforms of 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry) from around 1905. The jacket with broad mohair lace down the front and along the hem is distinctive of the patrol jacket, which was worn in undress. The helmet is covered in drab cloth and topped with a blackened spike. The four-fold beige silk *pugri* has scarlet material between each fold to match the facing colour. The regimental mess dress is of drab colour with beige mohair cords and lace. Cuffs and collar are in the scarlet facing. The waistcoat, also of drab colour, was v-necked and was worn with stiff white shirtfront and black bow tie. Officers of 92nd Punjabis wore white waistcoats. Trousers and pantaloons were also drab with two stripes of drab mohair braid one inch wide, with a piping of the colour of facings. The badges of rank were in silver embroidery on drab straps or in gilt. Silver coloured titles were worn on the shoulder cords.

By the start of the First World War, British officers had adopted the same uniforms as their men, including the *pugri*. The war put an end

to the elaborate uniforms of the past, which were now confined to members of the regimental bands and officers' mess kits. Light pith hats were worn by officers and swords were carried on Sam Browne leather cross belts. During the inter-war period, with the formation of 8th Punjab Regiment, a drab coloured uniform with blue facings was adopted by all battalions. Waistcoat of the summer mess kit was abandoned for a blue silk cummerbund. Indian officers and men continued to wear *pugris* but without badges, except for the 4th Battalion, who were allowed badges on *pugris* while on parade. Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus tied their turbans in distinctive fashions. Loose baggy shorts came into vogue and were worn in hot weather with boots and *puttees* by both officers and men. In 1942, a new battle dress approved for the British Army was also adopted by the Indian Army and the Indian-style dresses soon vanished including *pugris,* which gave way to drab berets for 8th Punjab Regiment. These battle dresses were of khaki and green colours, and after independence, khaki became the colour of Pakistan Army, while the Indians adopted green. The Regiment continued to wear the badges and ceremonial dresses of pre-partition days until its amalgamation with the Baluch Regiment in 1956, when Baluchi badges and uniform were adopted.

Although there is mention of sepoys wearing regimental badges on their *pugris* at the end of the 18th century, the records are sketchy. The badges were generally simple affairs with the number of the unit inside a circlet or the garter, surmounted by the crown. However, these badges underwent frequent alterations due to changes in the designations of the units as well as modifications due to incorporation of Battle Honours into the badges.

By 1903, all battalions of the Regiment had adopted distinctive badges. The badge of 89th Punjabis was a Sikh quoit intertwined with a Muslim crescent, the Regimental and King's Colours crossing behind, and the whole surmounted by a Tudor crown with a scroll underneath. The badge of 90th Punjabis was a Sikh quoit enclosing a 'Chinthe', the mythical Burmese lion-dragon, surmounted by the crown with a scroll underneath. The 91st Punjabis adopted an elegant badge made up of crossed Burmese *dahs*. The White Elephant of Burma in silver surrounded by the Sikh quoit in gilt and surmounted by the crown was the badge chosen for 92nd Punjabis, while the badge of 93rd Burma

Infantry was a Royal Burmese Peacock in silver. The badges for most part were only worn by officers with their mess kits and on pouch belts. It was only after the adoption of the berets during the Second World War that badges were worn by all ranks. In light of the shared history of the battalions, the newly formed 8th Punjab Regiment adopted Chinthe as their emblem in 1927. The badge was of gilded silver with Chinthe above the numeral '8' and a title scroll. Blue diamond-shaped backings were worn with the regimental cap badges.

Appendix VIII

Re-designation on Amalgamation with The Baluch Regiment 1956

Old Designation	New Designation
1/8th Punjab	1 Baluch
2/8th Punjab	2 Baluch
3/8th Punjab	3 Baluch
4/8th Punjab (PWO)	4 Baluch
5/8th Punjab (Burma)	5 Baluch
6/8th Punjab	13 Baluch
8/8th Punjab	17 Baluch
9/8th Punjab	18 Baluch

References and Notes

Preface

1. In 1991, the spelling of 'Baluch' was changed to 'Baloch' to better reflect the correct pronunciation.
2. The Madras Army.
3. Corruption of the word platoon—the sepoys' term for battalion. Battalions are still called *Paltans* in Pakistan Army.

Chapter 1: The Madras Infantry

1. John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company,* p. 283.
2. Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour*, p. 29.
3. Michael Glover, *An Assemblage of Indian Army Soldiers & Uniforms*, p. 1. The attacking force consisted of 1100 Europeans and 400 sepoys.
4. EG Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry 1748-1943*, p. 1. These consisted mostly of out-dated matchlocks and even bows and arrows.
5. In the early days of East India Company's forces, the European element was often composed of a mixture of adventurers, mercenaries and deserters from different countries.
6. Sepoys were referred to as Privates, the first mention of the term in official documents being in 1786. The rank of Jemadar was replaced in Pakistan Army by Naib Subedar.
7. Mason, p. 62.
8. Ibid, p. 37.
9. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* p. 6. In 1763, Subedar Yusuf Khan, also known as the Nellore Subedar, rebelled and joined the French. A large British force failed to subdue him, and he only surrendered after the treachery of his French troops.
10. Mason, p. 63. Although the British officers were in overall command of the unit, the Native Commandant enjoyed considerable authority in managing the affairs of sepoys.
11. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* pp. 2-3.
12. MI Qureshi, *The First Punjabis: History of the First Punjab Regiment 1759-1956,* p. 144.
13. *Walker of Bowland Papers,* National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
14. Mason, p. 70. The combined forces of Hyder Ali and the Nizam were estimated to be 43,000 cavalry, 28,000 infantry and 109 guns.

15. Glover, p. 2. Initially, the British were not very keen on cavalry. Infantry had reigned supreme in the recent European wars and their own experience in India, where small numbers of well-disciplined infantry had frequently routed the wild charges of Indian cavalry had bred disdain for cavalry. Cavalry was also expensive to maintain. However, the experiences of Mysore and Mahratta wars, where Hyder Ali's cavalry and Mahratta horsemen had successfully harassed British lines of communication led to a reappraisal of the policy. The successful use of Indian cavalry at Sitabaldi in the 3rd Mahratta War finally made cavalry a permanent arm of the British Indian Army.
16. Mason, p. 172. The lingering resentment of Indian officers at their demotion is cited as one of the reasons that led to the Mutiny of 1857.
17. *The Army in India and its Evolution,* pp. 12-13.
18. Qureshi, pp. 151-153.
19. Each Star Pagoda was equivalent to three and a half Rupees, and there were 42 Fanams in each Star Pagoda.
20. *Batta* was a special field allowance.
21. WJ Wilson, *History of the Madras Army,* vol 3, pp. 89-90.
22. Geoffery Betham and HVR Geary, *The Golden Galley: Story of the Second Punjab Regiment 1761-1947,* pp. 19-20.
23. AJ Guy and PB Boyden, *Soldiers of the Raj,* pp. 68-73.
24. Ibid, pp. 138-142.
25. Ibid, pp. 36-37.
26. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* p. 109.
27. *Report of the Royal Commission appointed in 1859 to enquire into the organisation of the Indian Army*.
28. J Michael, *The Native Army of Madras*, p. 13
29. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry*, pp. 110-111.
30. TA Heathcote, *The Indian Army,* p. 122.
31. Wilson, vol 2, pp. 351-352. The Extra Battalions were designated as such because they were in addition to the fixed establishment of infantry battalions in the army.
32. Wilson, vol 3, p. 86.
33. Ibid, vol 2, p. 353.
34. Ibid, vol 3, pp. 86-87.
35. Ibid. The battalion claims that it was originally raised in 1759-60, only to be temporarily broken up in 1793. However, there is no evidence to support these claims.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.

38. Ibid, vol 4, pp. 391-392.

Chapter 2: Early Campaigns

1. Digest of Service, 7th Burma Battalion, p. 123. The battalion was called out in 1800, 1804 and between 1809 and 1814.
2. Wilson, vol 3, pp. 25-27; and EG Phythian-Adams, *The Madras Soldier 1746-1946*, p. 45.
3. Wilson, vol 3, p. 42. The total British losses amounted to 317 killed and wounded all ranks.
4. Ibid, pp. 39-44; and Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* pp. 37-40. The rebellion cost the British more than 800 casualties.
5. In 1800, the Nizam of Deccan effectively handed over his sovereignty to the British by accepting British protection against the Mahrattas in the form of a large British force stationed at Hyderabad. He was also ordered to disband his French-trained and officered force known as the French Contingent. A number of troops from this contingent went on to form the Masulipatam Battalion, later 2/15th MNI (2/8th Punjab).
6. The future Duke of Wellington and younger brother of the Marquess Wellesley, the British Governor General in India.
7. The British force totalled more than 50,000—larger than any force they had fielded so far in India. The Mahratta forces numbered about 56,000 regulars with an undetermined number of irregulars.
8. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 94.
9. Wilson, vol 3, p. 63.
10. Ibid, pp. 128-129.
11. Ibid, pp. 140-145.
12. Ibid, pp. 146-148; and Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* p. 47.
13. Ibid, pp. 208-209.
14. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 95.
15. Wilson, vol 3, pp. 209-210. The battle honour was awarded in 1840. The battalion was the sole recipient of the award.
16. Alexander Cardew, *The White Mutiny,* pp. 129-144.
17. Ibid, p. 6.
18. Wilson, vol 3, pp. 296-297.
19. Ibid, pp. 321-322.
20. Donovan Jackson, *India's Army,* p. 273.
21. Wilson, vol 3, p. 388.
22. *The Mahratta and Pindari War,* p. 11. Amir Khan commanded an army of 12,000 horse, 10,000 foot and 200 artillery pieces, while the rest of the

Pindari *darras* had a combined strength of 15,000 horse, 15,000 foot and 20 guns.

23. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 96.
24. Wilson, vol 4, pp. 94-96; and V Blacker, *Memoir of the operations of the British Army in India, during the Mahratta and Pindaree War of 1817, 1818, & 1819,* pp. 238-242.
25. *The Mahratta and Pindari War,* pp. 49-50.
26. Wilson, vol 4, p. 66. The delay in the move of the 1st Brigade was due to an effort to bring European troops to the front.
27. Ibid, pp. 62-70; and *The Mahratta and Pindari War,* pp. 50-51.
28. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 6, Overseas Expeditions, pp. 283-286.
29. Wilson, vol 4, pp. 391-392.
30. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 96. Major George L Wahab was the son of Major General George Wahab, who had raised the battalion in 1800. He went on to become a Major General himself.

Chapter 3: The Burma Wars

1. George Bruce, *The Burma Wars,* pp. 78-79.
2. Ibid, pp. 18-19. The Burmese had 500 of these war boats manned by 50-60 men. They also had a small but highly mobile cavalry force.
3. Wilson, vol 4, pp. 309-313.
4. Ibid, p. 319. It included 222 artillery pieces, 10,000 lbs of gunpowder, 900 muskets and 2000 spears.
5. GW DeRhe-Phillipe, *Narrative of the First Burmese War 1824-26,* p. 174.
6. Ibid, p. 191.
7. Ibid, p.192.
8. Wilson, vol 4, pp. 323-324.
9. Ibid, p. 330; and DeRhe-Phillipe, pp. 287-289.
10. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, Burma, p. 430.
11. Wilson, vol 4, p. 358.
12. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 6, pp. 339-347.
13. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* pp. 64-65; and HM Vibart, *The Military History of The Madras Engineers and Pioneers,* vol 2, pp. 86-92.
14. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 97. Indian Army units had a large camp following. Some were officially sanctioned like sweepers, water carriers and lascars, while others were traders from the regimental bazaar, servants, and in Madras units, even families of the troops.
15. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, pp. 88-93.
16. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, pp. 97-98.

17. *The Revolt in Central India 1857-59,* pp. 38-48; and Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 98.
18. Ibid, pp. xx-xxi.
19. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *History of the Baloch Regiment 1820-1939*, pp. 101-107.
20. *The Revolt in Central India 1857-59,* pp. 171-176.
21. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* pp. 64-65.
22. Ibid. No unit of 8th Punjab Regiment was awarded the Campaign Honour of 'Central India', which is surprising, especially in the case of 33rd MNI, which was actively involved in operations.
23. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, p. 72; and Muhammad Afzal, *The 8th Punjab Regiment,* p. 48.
24. Ahmed, pp. 108-113; and *The Army in India and its Evolution,* pp. 18-20.
25. Heathcote, p. 55.
26. Ibid, p. 111.
27. Ibid, pp. 55-56
28. *The Army in India and its Evolution,* p. 22.
29. Jackson, p. 275.
30. *The Second Afghan War 1878-80,* pp. 2-3, 7, 151-152, 652, 718.
31. Jackson, p. 276.
32. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* p. 76.
33. Ibid.
34. Bruce, pp. 151-161.
35. Phythian-Adams, *Madras Infantry,* pp. 78-82.
36. Digest of Service, 7th Burma Battalion, pp. 124-5.
37. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, pp. 374-375.
38. Ibid, pp. 307-308.
39. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, pp. 73-74.

Chapter 4: A Punjabi Renaissance

1. These included Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, Jats, Pathans, Hindu and Muslim Rajputs, Deccani and Hindustani (UP and Bihar) Muslims, Dogras and Mahrattas. Balochis and Brahuis were also included in the list until they fell out of favour after the First World War.
2. David Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940,* p. 24.
3. Heathcote, p. 88.
4. Omissi, p. 15. Since 1862, the number of officers in Madras Army had been halved to 664 in 1881. Out of these, 248 were colonels, 60 were captains and 110 were subalterns.
5. Ibid, p. 12.

6. Ibid, p. 16. In 1893, out of a total strength of 144,020 men in the Indian Army, 21,837 were Punjabi Muslims and Pathans, 21,966 were Sikhs and 12,334 were Gurkhas.
7. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, pp. 290-293.
8. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, pp. 99-101.
9. Standing Orders, 4/8th Punjab, p. 96; and Afzal, p. 69.
10. Digest of Service, 5th Burma Battalion. The companies were transferred from the Pyinmana, Magwe and Katha Battalions of Military Police.
11. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, pp. 72-74. The only items taken over from the old unit were the Colours.
12. Afzal, p. 11; Digest of Service, 7th Burma Battalion, p.30.
13. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 94.
14. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, p. 347.
15. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, p. 74.
16. PP Hypher, *Deeds of Valour Performed by Indian Officers and Soldiers during the Period from 1860 to 1925,* p. 85.
17. Digest of Service, 5th Burma Battalion.
18. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, pp. 101-102; and *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 5, pp. 389-391.
19. Standing Orders, 4/8th Punjab, p. 96.
20. *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India,* vol 6, pp. 454-461.
21. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, pp. 7-24; also Jackson, p. 277.
22. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 102.
23. John Gaylor, *Sons of John Company: The Indian and Pakistan Armies 1903-91,* p. 156.
24. *The Army in India and its Evolution,* pp. 22-25.
25. Ibid, pp. 25-30; also Ahmed pp. 160-163.
26. Gaylor, pp. 5-7.
27. These were all single-battalion regiments. To avoid confusion, they have been referred to throughout the text as battalions rather than regiments.
28. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 102.
29. Gaylor, p. 157.
30. In 1904, the battalion was re-designated as 91st Punjabis (Light Infantry).
31. Gaylor, pp. 8-9.
32. Afzal, pp. 11-12.
33. Ibid, p. 30; also Digest of Service, 90th Punjabis.
34. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, pp. 24-31.
35. Standing Orders, 4/8th Punjab.
36. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, p. 102.
37. Ahmed, pp. 163-170.

Chapter 5: The Great War

1. James E Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I,* pp. 370, 380; and MGE Bowman-Manifold, *An outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914 to 1918,* p. 6.
2. NM Geoghegan and MHA Campbell, *History of the 1st Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment,* pp. 1-2; WS Haycraft, *Regimental History,1914-1920, 93rd Burma Infantry,* pp. 2-3; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
3. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 3-7.
4. Charles Lucas, *The Empire at War,* vol 5, pp. 47-62; and Bowman-Manifold, pp. 6-9. The attacks on Ismailia, Ferdan and Suez were not carried out with any vigour and were easily beaten back.
5. Lucas, pp. 58-59, 243.
6. Haycraft, pp. 2-3.
7. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 8-9.
8. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis. Indian infantry battalions were still organized into four double-companies (numbered 1 to 4) of two companies each (designated A to H). In 1916, the double-companies were abolished, and the battalions were reorganized into four companies (A to D) besides the Headquarters Wing.
9. Geoghegan and Campbell, p. 10.
10. Hypher, p. 243.
11. George MacMunn and Cyril Falls, *Official History of the War: Military Operations, Egypt & Palestine*, vol 1, pp. 37-41; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
12. Hypher, p. 244.
13. MacMunn and Falls, vol 1, pp. 42-47; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
14. Hypher, pp. 243-244.
15. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 11-13.
16. CF Aspinall-Oglander, *Official History of the War: Military Operations, Gallipoli,* vol 1, p. 324. The British quickly overcame their reservations regarding Muslim soldiers, who were widely employed against the Turks in Mesopotamia and Palestine.
17. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 13-16; and Lucas, pp. 247-248.
18. Ibid, p. 16. Captains Strong and Engledue, and Lieutenants Masters and Hasluck stayed behind with the 14th Sikhs. Both the lieutenants were later killed in action.
19. JWB Merewether and Frederick Smith, *The Indian Corps in France,* p. 469. The figures include the casualties of British regiments serving with the corps. The casualties of Indian units amounted to 21,413 including 496 officers. The number of dead or missing, all ranks, was 6528.

20. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 17-18. The Indian divisions and brigades were usually referred to by their names rather than numbers to avoid confusion with British formations with the same numbers.
21. Ibid, pp. 19-25.
22. Haycraft, pp. 12-14.
23. Edmonds, p. 143; and Lucas, p. 232.
24. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 25-33.
25. Haycraft, pp. 14-15.
26. Ibid, pp. 15-19.

Chapter 6: The Mesopotamian Campaign

1. FJ Moberly, *History of the Great War: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918,* vol 1, pp. 224-237; and Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, pp. 1-2.
2. Moberly, vol 1, pp. 275-297.
3. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, pp. 2-3.
4. Ibid.
5. Hypher, p. 264.
6. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 213-242; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
7. Ibid, pp. 243-255.
8. Haycraft, pp. 23-28.
9. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 260-276; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
10. Haycraft, pp. 28-31.
11. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, p. 4.
12. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 310-349; Haycraft, pp. 35-40; and Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 38-39.
13. Haycraft, p. 40.
14. Until 1917, doctors were the only Indians, who were granted King's Commissions.
15. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 352-354; and Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 40-42.
16. Ibid, pp. 367-393; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
17. Edmund Candler, *The Long Road to Baghdad,* vol 1, p. 180.
18. Hypher, pp. 301-302.
19. General Lake replaced General Nixon as Commander of British forces in Mesopotamia in January 1916.
20. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 395-422.
21. Hypher, p. 301.
22. Geoghegan and Campbell, p. 45; and Hypher, p. 182.
23. Haycraft, pp. 49-50.
24. Geoghegan and Campbell, p. 48.

25. Hypher, p. 302. In the desperate hand-to-hand fighting, Subedar Major Muhammad Bakhsh killed a Turk with his bare hands.
26. Moberly, vol 2, pp. 423-432; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
27. Haycraft, pp. 56-58.
28. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, p. 5.
29. Hypher, p. 341.
30. Moberly, vol 3, pp. 89-103. The Khudaira Bend is also referred to as the Mohammad Abdul Hassan Bend.
31. Ibid, p. 79; and Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, pp. 42-43.
32. Haycraft, p. 76.
33. Ibid, p. 77.
34. Ibid, pp. 77-78.
35. Hypher, p. 343.
36. Haycraft, pp. 80-82.
37. Moberly, vol 3, pp. 149-183; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
38. Ibid, pp. 230-239.
39. Ibid, pp. 272-283.
40. Haycraft, p. 95.
41. Ibid, p. 97.
42. Ibid, p. 98.
43. Moberly, vol 3, pp. 330-344; and War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
44. Haycraft, pp. 107-110.
45. Geoghegan and Campbell, p. 54.
46. Gaylor, p. 157.
47. Moberly, vol 4, pp. 21-25, 49-61; and AH Burne, *Mesopotamia: The Last Phase,* pp. 60-65.
48. Haycraft, pp. 104-106.
49. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, p. 6.
50. Ibid.
51. Moberly, vol 4, pp. 78-84; and Burne, pp. 67-72.
52. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
53. Geoghegan and Campbell, pp. 58-61.

Chapter 7: Palestine

1. Edmonds, p. 374.
2. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
3. Hypher, pp. 385-386.
4. Cyril Falls, *Official History of the War: Military Operations, Egypt & Palestine*, vol 2, Pt II, p. 482.
5. Hypher, p. 386.

6. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
7. Ibid; and Falls, vol 2, Pt II, p. 483.
8. Falls, vol 2, Pt II, pp. 476-477.
9. Ibid, pp. 477-478, 505-506; Haycraft, pp. 122-125; and Hypher, p. 197.
10. Ibid, p. 510.
11. Cyril Falls, *The First World War*, p. 380.
12. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, p. 57.
13. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
14. Haycraft, pp. 129-133.
15. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, p. 60.
16. War Diary, 92nd Punjabis.
17. Geoghegan and Campbell, p. 64.
18. Ibid, pp. 65-70.

Chapter 8: Birth of a Regiment

1. *The Third Afghan War, 1919: Official Account,* pp. 21-25, 52-61.
2. The same General Dyer who had ordered the massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar six weeks earlier.
3. *The Third Afghan War, 1919: Official Account,* pp. 148, 171.
4. Ibid, pp. 140, 171.
5. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, pp. 7-8.
6. *The Third Afghan War, 1919: Official Account,* pp. 69-70.
7. Historical Record, 90th Punjabis, pp. 8-9.
8. AL Haldane, *Insurrection in Mesopotamia 1920,* pp. 162, 344.
9. *The Army in India and its Evolution,* pp. 33-42.
10. Ibid, pp. 102-105.
11. Ibid, pp. 100-101.
12. The Army orders had defined the class as Rajputana Hindus (other than Rajputs, Jats and Mers). However, the Regiment decided to enrol only Rajputana Gujars. Due to difficulty in finding sufficient recruits in Rajputana, the recruiting area was extended to District Gurgaon in 1923. 8th Punjab was the only regiment in the Indian Army, which recruited Gujars.
13. Historical Records, 90th, 91st and 92nd Punjabis.
14. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, pp. 64-65.
15. Ibid, pp. 100-101; and Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
16. Gaylor, p. 157.
17. Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
18. Qureshi, p. 259.
19. Standing Orders, 4/8th Punjab, p. 96.

20. The London Gazette 9 September 1924, p. 6722.
21. Official Despatch, Supplement to the London Gazette, 26 April 1922, p. 3304.
22. Historical Record, 92nd Punjabis.
23. CC Trench, *The Indian Army and the King's Enemies, 1900-1947,* p. 121.
24. JG Elliott, *The Frontier 1839-1947: The Story of the North-West Frontier of India,* pp. 263-264.
25. Historical Record, 91st Punjabis, pp. 62-64.
26. Afzal, p. 15.
27. Wisal Mohammed Khan, *History of 2/8 Punjab,* pp. 19-20.
28. Afzal, p. 91.
29. Ibid, p. 76.
30. Ibid, pp. 15, 56.
31. Wisal Khan, p. 22.
32. Afzal, p. 15.
33. Wisal Khan, p. 23.
34. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, p. 83.
35. Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
36. Wisal Khan, pp. 24-25.
37. Standing Orders, 3/8th Punjab, p. 84.
38. Digest of Service, 4/8th Punjab.
39. 8th Punjab Regimental Magazine, 1936, p. 1.
40. Ibid, 1937, p. 11.
41. Afzal, p. 57.
42. Trench, pp. 126-128.
43. Elliott, pp. 270-271; and Arthur Swinson, *North-West Frontier,* pp. 383-388. The Faqir was described by a Pakistani official as "a vicious old man, twisted with hate and selfishness". He died in 1960.
44. Ibid, 274-275.
45. 2nd Battalion Newsletter, 8th Punjab Regimental Magazine, 1937, pp. 4-5.
46. 4th Battalion Newsletter, 1937, p. 12.
47. Elliott, pp. 275-276.
48. 2nd Battalion Newsletter, 1937, p. 5; and Wisal Khan, p. 28.
49. Elliott, pp. 276-278.
50. 2nd Battalion Newsletter, 1937, pp. 5-6; and Wisal Khan, pp. 28-29.
51. Ibid.
52. Wisal Khan, p. 29.
53. 4th Battalion Newsletters, 1938, pp. 12-13; and 1939, p. 14.
54. Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj,* pp. 304-305.
55. 5th Battalion Newsletters, 1938, pp. 15-17; 1939, p. 19; and 1948, p.18.

56. Trench, pp. 132-133; and Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
57. Ibid; and Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
58. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 18.
59. Ibid, pp. 18-19.
60. Omissi, p. 161.
61. Farwell, pp. 293-296. The British were more liberal with Indian doctors, who were granted King's Commissions as early as 1855. During the First World War, almost 700 of them were commissioned.
62. Ibid, pp. 297-299. A half-baked policy was formulated to introduce the rank of Warrant Officer in Indianised battalions to mollify the ORs. A few warrant officers were actually created in 5/8th Punjab in 1937. The battalion seemed unsure what to do with them. In 1941, when Indianisation was abandoned, the VCOs returned to the battalion.
63. Ibid, pp. 299-300.
64. The Quarterly Indian Army List, July 1921, p. 1375.
65. AO Mitha, *Unlikely Beginnings: A Soldier's Life,* pp. 129-131.
66. The Indian Army List, April 1933, p. 604. By 1937, the battalion had received more than a dozen Indian KCOs and ICOs.
67. Farwell, pp. 301-302.

Chapter 9: The Second World War

1. Farwell, p. 304.
2. JG Elliott, *A Roll of Honour: The History of the Indian Army, 1939-1945,* p. 20.
3. Farwell, p. 310. Gandhi advised the British to submit to the Nazis peacefully, while Nehru remarked that the Japanese would be no worse than the British.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, p. 308.
6. Centre Notes, 8th Punjab Regimental Magazine, 1946, pp. 2-7.
7. 6th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 24-27.
8. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *History of the Baloch Regiment 1939-1956,* pp. 168-170.
9. Centre Notes, 1946, p. 4; and 1948, p. 3.
10. 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 27-51.
11. Afzal, p. 105.
12. 14th Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 34-36.
13. Centre Notes, 1946, p. 4; and Gaylor, p. 158. Records of the battalion are not available.
14. 16th Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 37-39.

15. Centre Notes, 1946, pp. 4, 6; and Gaylor, p. 20. Records of the battalions are not available.
16. Ibid, pp. 3-6. Records of 108, 208, 308, 408, 608 and 708 Garrison Companies are not available.
17. Ahmed, p. 15.
18. Afzal, p. 115.
19. 808 Garrison Company Newsletter, 1946, pp. 40-42.
20. Afzal, pp. 119-120.
21. 1008 Garrison Company Newsletter, 1946, pp. 42-44.

Chapter 10: The Malayan Tragedy

1. Compton Mackenzie, *Eastern Epic,* pp. 218-225.
2. Notes by Maj PR Adams; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 10. The account appearing in the regimental magazine was written by Lt Col ER Andrews, who was Second-in-Command of the battalion in Malaya.
3. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 11.
4. Elliott, pp. 131-132.
5. S Woodburn Kirby, *The War against Japan,* vol 1, p. 170.
6. Louis Allen, *Singapore 1941-1942,* pp. 116-120.
7. Elliott, pp. 132-135.
8. Kirby, vol 1, pp. 168-170.
9. Mackenzie, pp. 233-253.
10. Elliott, pp. 135-138.
11. Kirby, vol 1, p. 204.
12. *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* pp. 143-145.
13. Ibid, p. 145; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 12-13.
14. Ibid, pp. 145-146; 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 13; and Mackenzie, p. 245.
15. Ibid, pp. 149-152.
16. Ibid, p. 152; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 14.
17. Ibid, pp. 159-162; and Kirby, vol 1, pp. 206-207.
18. Ibid, pp. 162-163; Kirby, vol 1, p. 207; Mackenzie, p. 257; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 14.
19. Ibid, pp. 163-164; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 14.
20. Ibid, pp. 164-169; and Kirby, p. 209-210.
21. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 14-15.
22. Ibid, pp. 15-16.
23. Mackenzie, p. 259.

24. *Official History: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* p. 172; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 16.
25. Ibid, pp. 172-174; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 16-17.
26. Ibid, p. 174; 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 17; and Kirby, vol 1, p. 216.
27. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 17; and Kirby, vol 1, pp. 216-217.
28. Ibid, pp. 17-18.
29. Ibid, p. 18; and Mackenzie, p. 262.
30. Mackenzie, pp. 276-277.
31. Kirby, vol 1, pp. 246-247.
32. Ibid, pp. 247-248; Mackenzie, pp. 278-279; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 18.
33. Mackenzie, p. 279; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 18.
34. AE Percival, *The War in Malaya,* p. 198.
35. Mackenzie, p. 279.
36. Ibid; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 18.
37. Percival, p. 198.
38. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 19.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid; and *Official History: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* p. 209.
41. Kirby, vol 1, pp. 273, 287-288.
42. Ibid, p. 288; Mackenzie, pp. 332-333; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 19.
43. *Official History: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* pp. 244-245; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 19.
44. Ibid, p. 249; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 19.
45. Ibid, pp. 282-283; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 20.
46. Mackenzie, pp. 379-381.
47. Ibid, pp. 381-382; and 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 20.
48. Ibid.
49. Allen, p.158.
50. Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India,* p. 548.
51. Mackenzie, pp. 384-385; and *Official History: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* pp. 312-318.
52. Kirby, vol 1, p. 383; and Mackenzie, pp. 386-388.
53. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 20.
54. Kirby, vol 1, p. 399.
55. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 20.
56. Kirby, vol 1, pp. 384-386.
57. Ibid, pp. 390-394; and Mackenzie, pp. 393-394.

58. *Official History: Campaigns in Southeast Asia 1941-42,* pp. 332, 340-352. Regimental records of 7/8th Punjab are not available.
59. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 21.
60. GH Corr, *The War of the Springing Tigers,* p. 119; and Farwell, p. 335.
61. Farwell, p. 335; and Francis Tuker, *While Memory Serves,* p. 562. Out of about 15,000 INA soldiers employed in Burma, only 150 were killed in action. The rest surrendered, deserted or died of disease.
62. Ibid, p. 364; and Shaukat Riza, *The Pakistan Army 1947-49,* p. 106.
63. 1st Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 21; and Supplement to *The London Gazette,* 25 September 1947, No. 38079, p. 4513.
64. Ibid, 1948, pp. 3-7. 7/8th Punjab was not re-raised.
65. Elliot, pp. 71-80.
66. Mackenzie, pp. 591-595.
67. 4th Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 28-31.
68. Ibid, 1948, pp. 14-17.
69. 3rd Battalion Newsletter, 1946, pp. 21-23; and MV Vaughan, *History of 3/8 Punjab Regiment,* pp. 11-14.

Chapter 11: One More River to Cross

1. *The Tiger Triumphs: The Story of Three Great Divisions in Italy,* p. 9.
2. BH Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War,* p. 553.
3. *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 14-16.
4. Vaughan, p. 15.
5. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 17-18.
6. Vaughan, p. 15; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
7. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 19.
8. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 10-11.
9. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 24-25. The common bond of service in Italy led to affiliation of 6/13th Frontier Force Rifles (1 FF) and 3/8th Punjab (3 Baloch) as sister units.
10. Ibid, p. 25; Vaughan, p. 16; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
11. Ibid, p. 31; and Vaughan, p. 17. The Germans blew up the bridge after withdrawing.
12. Vaughan, p. 17; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
13. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 31; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab. The battalion remained under heavy German shelling throughout 18 November. Captain GM Longstaffe, the Quartermaster, was killed while bringing in supplies.
14. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 15-17.

15. Ibid, pp. 14-15.
16. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 40; Vaughan, p. 18; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab. The preference of 3/8th Punjabis for silent night attack over dawn attack under a creeping artillery barrage was vindicated by their successes at the Trigno and the Sangro. The 1/5th Essex, who preferred the dawn attack, failed at both places.
17. Ibid; Vaughan, p. 18; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
18. Vaughan, pp. 18, 40; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
19. Ibid; *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 41; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
20. Ibid pp. 18-19; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
21. WO 373/5, p. 940.
22. Vaughan pp. 18-19; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
23. WO 373/5, pp. 938-939, 941.
24. Ibid, pp. 939, 941.
25. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 41-42.
26. Vaughan p. 19; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
27. Ibid; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
28. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 42-43.
29. Vaughan p. 20.
30. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 27-28.
31. Vaughan, p. 21.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid; and *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 82.
34. Ibid, pp. 21-22; and WO 373/6, pp. 72, 74. Naik Benares later died of his wounds.
35. Ibid, p. 22; and *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 29-30.
36. Ibid, pp. 22-23.
37. Ibid, p. 23.
38. GA Shepperd, *The Italian Campaign, 1943-45,* p. 256.
39. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 65-66.
40. Ibid, pp. 67-69.
41. Vaughan, pp. 24-25.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid, p. 25; and *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 163.
44. Ibid; *The Tiger Triumphs,* p. 71; and *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 163-164.
45. Ibid, p. 26; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
46. Ibid; and *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 74-75.

47. *The Tiger Triumphs,* p. 72. At the age of around 20 years, Sepoy Kamal Ram was the youngest Indian to receive the Victoria Cross.
48. WO 373/8, pp. 45-46.
49. Ibid, pp. 154-155.
50. Vaughan, p. 26; *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 71-72; *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* p. 164; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
51. Ibid, pp. 26, 44-47; and *The Tiger Triumphs,* p. 76.
52. Ibid, p. 27; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab. There is a slight discrepancy in casualty figures between the two sources.
53. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 72-73.
54. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45,* pp. 185-202; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
55. WO 373/8, p. 1062.
56. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45*, pp. 240-241; *The Tiger Triumphs,* p. 85; Vaughan, p. 28; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
57. Ibid, pp. 414-415; and Vaughan, pp. 28-29.
58. Ibid, pp. 514-515; Vaughan, p. 29; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
59. Ibid, p. 515; Vaughan, p. 29; and War Diary, 3/8th Punjab.
60. Ibid, p. 517; Vaughan, p. 29; and WO 373/10, pp. 1191, 1255.
61. Ibid, pp. 517-518; and Vaughan, p. 29.
62. Ibid, pp. 518-519.
63. WO 373/10, p. 1275.
64. WO 373/14, p. 946.
65. Vaughan, pp. 29-30.
66. *The Tiger Triumphs,* pp. 166-167.
67. Ibid, pp. 168-169; and Vaughan, p. 30.
68. Ibid, p. 170.
69. Ibid, p. 171; and Vaughan, p. 31.
70. Ibid, pp. 173-174.
71. Ibid, pp. 186-187.
72. Ibid, pp. 188-190; and Vaughan, p. 32.
73. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45*, p. 623; and Vaughan, p. 33.
74. WO 373/14, p. 944.
75. WO 373/13, p. 967.
76. Ibid, p. 964.
77. *Official History: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45*, p. 624.
78. Vaughan, p. 33.
79. WO 373/14, p. 1418.
80. *The Tiger Triumphs,* p. 193.

81. Ibid, pp. 198-199; and Vaughan, p. 33.
82. Ibid, pp. 199-200; and Vaughan, p. 33.
83. Vaughan, p. 36; and 3rd Battalion Newsletter, 1946, p. 27.
84. 3rd Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 8-12.

Chapter 12: Trial and Triumph in Burma

1. Farwell, p. 326.
2. Hart, pp. 243-244.
3. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 19.
4. 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 27-30.
5. WC Hawes, *A Monograph on the Wartime Experiences of the 2nd Battalion 8th Punjab Regiment, from July 1942 to June 1946,* pp. 1-2; and Wisal Khan, pp. 30-33.
6. William Slim, *Defeat into Victory,* pp. 149-150.
7. Ibid, p. 149; and Kirby, vol 2, pp. 253-254.
8. Ibid, p. 151; and Kirby, vol 2, pp. 255-257.
9. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 19.
10. Kirby, vol 2, pp. 261-263.
11. Ibid, p. 263.
12. Slim, p. 152.
13. Kirby, vol 2, p. 263.
14. Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Kirby, vol 2, pp. 266-268, 338-339; and 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 20.
18. Ibid, pp. 334-339.
19. Ibid, pp. 339-341; and 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 20.
20. Ibid, p. 341.
21. 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 30-31.
22. Kirby, vol 2, p. 343.
23. Ibid; and 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 31-33. Lieutenant MK Jung, the B Company Commander was dismissed from service.
24. Ibid, pp. 343-345.
25. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 20-21.
26. Hawes, p. 3.
27. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 21, 23; and Digest of Service, 5/8th Punjab.
28. Kirby, vol 2, p. 347-348.
29. Ibid, p. 349; and 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 35-36.

30. Ibid, pp. 351-353; and Slim, p. 159.
31. Hawes, p. 4.
32. Kirby, vol 2, p. 352-354.
33. 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 37-42.
34. Slim, p. 160. British failure was not just due to the poor performance of one or two units. Most the units involved in the operation had performed poorly.
35. Hawes, p. 5.
36. Ibid, pp. 6-8. The battalion served at Thal, Risalpur and Attock, where it was converted into a Reconnaissance Battalion.
37. Trench, p. 254-256.
38. Ibid.
39. Hart, pp. 539-540.
40. Major General DFW Warren, CBE, DSO, originally from 1/8th Punjab, had raised the 6th Battalion in 1940. A very popular commander, he was killed in an air crash on 11 February 1945, while commanding the 5th Indian Division in Burma.
41. Hawes, pp. 7-9; and Wisal Khan, p. 33.
42. Kirby, vol 4, p. 275.
43. Ibid, pp. 275-276.
44. Hawes, p. 9; and Wisal Khan, p. 33.
45. Ibid; and Kirby, vol 4, p. 276.
46. Ibid, pp. 9-10; Kirby, vol 4, pp. 276-277; and Wisal Khan, p. 34.
47. Ibid, p. 10. Quoted from 'History of the 2nd and 36th British Divisions.'
48. Kirby, vol 4, p. 277. Wisal Khan gives a figure of 80.
49. Hawes, p. 11; and Wisal Khan, p. 34.
50. Ibid; and Wisal Khan, p. 34.
51. Ibid; and Wisal Khan, pp. 34-35.
52. Kirby, vol 4, p. 278.
53. Hawes, p. 12; and Wisal Khan, p. 35.
54. Wisal Khan, p. 35.
55. Kirby, vol 4, pp. 365-366; and Hawes, p. 12.
56. Wisal Khan, p. 36. Three ORs killed, one VCO and 14 ORs wounded.
57. *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: Reconquest of Burma,* vol 2, pp. 436-437.
58. Ibid, p. 437; Hawes, p. 12; and Wisal Khan, p. 36.
59. Wisal Khan, p. 36.
60. Hawes, p. 12.
61. *Official History: Reconquest of Burma,* vol 2, p. 437; and Wisal Khan, p. 36.
62. Ibid, pp. 437-438.

63. MR Roberts, *Golden Arrow: The Story of the 7th Indian Division in the Second World War, 1939-1945,* pp. 241-244; and Slim, pp. 511-512.
64. Hawes, p. 13; and Wisal Khan, p. 37. Three Military Medals were awarded to the battalion for operations around Saigon.
65. AJF Doulton, *The Fighting Cock: Being the History of the 23rd Indian Division 1942-1947,* pp. 212-229; and 5th and 6th Battalion Newsletters, 1948, pp. 21, 25.
66. Kirby, vol 5, p. 351.
67. 6th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 25.
68. 5th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, p. 21; and Doulton, p. 287.
69. Ibid; and Doulton, pp. 287-288. The NCO was recommended for the award of Victoria Cross.
70. Ibid, pp. 21-23.
71. 8th Battalion Newsletter, 1948, pp. 44-50; and *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: Post-war Occupation Forces: Japan & South-east Asia,* pp. 241-244.

Chapter 13: A New Beginning

1. Afzal, p. 7.
2. Ibid, pp. 81-84. For a detailed description of the Kashmir War, refer to *History of the Baloch Regiment 1939-1956.*
3. Ahmed, p. 211; also Digest of Service 5/8th Punjab. A company of 1/8th Punjab served at Gilgit and Kamri.
4. Afzal, p. 100.
5. Ibid, p. 105.
6. Ahmed, p. 234.
7 Afzal, p. 21.
8. Ibid, pp. 106-107.
9. Ibid, pp. 8-9, 90.
10. Ibid, p. 20.
11. Fazal Muqeem Khan, *The Story of the Pakistan Army,* p. 146.
12. Ahmed, pp. 235-237. MSB was a new class, made up mostly of Ranghars and HMs.

Afterword

1. Victorious or dead.

Appendix III: Campaign and Battle Honours

1. HCB Cook, *The Battle Honours of the British and Indian Armies, 1662-1982,* pp. 1-12.

Appendix IV: Awards and Decorations

1. The list has been compiled from various sources, principally regimental records and the London Gazette, and might not be exhaustive. Names of individuals serving on staff or with other regiments have also been included.
2. Victoria Cross, the highest award for individual acts of gallantry "in the face of the enemy", was instituted in 1856. Until 1905, it was not awarded posthumously. The award was extended to Indians in 1912.
3. The Most Honourable Order of the Bath was founded in 1399 and has three classes: Knight Grand Cross (GCB), Knight Commander (KCB) and Companion (CB) in that order of precedence. The awards of the Military Division were conferred upon officers of the rank of major and above for distinguished service in war.
4. The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire was founded in 1877, to reward British and Indian officials for services in India. It had three classes: Knight Grand Commander, Knight Commander and Companion. Appointments to the Order ceased after 1947.
5. The Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George was instituted in 1818. It has three classes. Since 1864, it has been awarded for services rendered in relation to foreign affairs.
6. The Distinguished Service Order was established in 1886, for rewarding individual instances of meritorious or distinguished service in war. It was generally awarded to officers in command, usually above the rank of captain.
7. The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire was established in 1917, for services rendered to the British Empire. In 1918, a Military Division was created for services in the field. It has five classes: Knight Grand Cross (GBE), Knight Commander (KBE), Commander (CBE), Officer (OBE) and Member (MBE).
8. The Indian Order of Merit was instituted in 1837, for rewarding conspicuous acts of gallantry in battle by Indian officers and men. Until the extension of Victoria Cross to Indians in 1912, it was the highest gallantry award conferred upon Indian soldiers.
9. Military Cross was instituted in 1914, for acts of individual gallantry and was open to Indian and British officers up to the rank of substantive major.
10. The Order of British India was created in 1837 and was awarded to Indian officers for long and faithful service. It had two classes (1st and 2nd) and the recipients were entitled to a special allowance of Rs. 2 per day in addition to the titles of Sardar Bahadur and Bahadur.

11. The Indian Distinguished Service Medal was instituted in 1907, for rewarding distinguished service in the field by Indian officers and men.
12. The Indian Meritorious Service Medal was awarded for long and distinguished service or acts of particular merit by Indian Other Ranks. Between 1916 and 1919, it was also awarded for gallant or meritorious service in the field, not in the face of the enemy.
13. Figures for 93rd Burma Infantry are not available.
14. Military Medal was instituted in 1916, to reward NCOs and men for acts of bravery in battle.
15. 8th Punjab Regiment refers to those individuals whose parent units are not known or who were on extra-regimental duty.

Appendix V: War Casualties

1. The casualty figures have been taken from regimental records and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
2. The figures include individuals serving with other units.
3. The exact figures of wounded and POWs are not known. The strength of the battalion at the start of hostilities was 900 and a draft of 450 was received just before the capitulation of Singapore. Out of 1350 officers and men who served with the battalion, 323 were killed in fighting or later, during Japanese captivity. The rest were taken prisoner.
4. The battalion was captured soon after its arrival in Singapore. While the exact number of fatalities is known, the figures for wounded and POWs are not available.
5. 8th Punjab Regiment refers to those individuals whose parent units are not known or who were on extra-regimental duty at the time of the casualty.
6. Died in a POW camp.

Appendix VI: Commanding Officers

1. Complete list of commanding officers prior to 1865 is not available. Highest ranks achieved in command are shown.
2. The battalion was disbanded in 1948 and complete records prior to it are not available.
3. The battalion was disbanded in 1946 and complete records prior to it are not available.

Appendix VII: Uniforms & Badges

1. Qureshi, pp. 146-151.
2. Guy and Boyden, pp. 118-135.
3. Wilson, vol 4, pp. 288, 388, 493.

4. Gaylor, pp. 326-331.
5. *Army Regulations India 1913 – Dress,* pp. 1-18, 47, 53-55, 78, 85.
6. *Dress Regulations (India), 1931,* pp. 87, 106.
7. Standing Orders, 10/8th Punjab, pp. 41-43.
8. Standing Orders, 5/8th Punjab, pp. 94-99.
9. Regimental Records, 1/8th, 2/8th, 3/8th, 4/8th and 5/8th Punjab.

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